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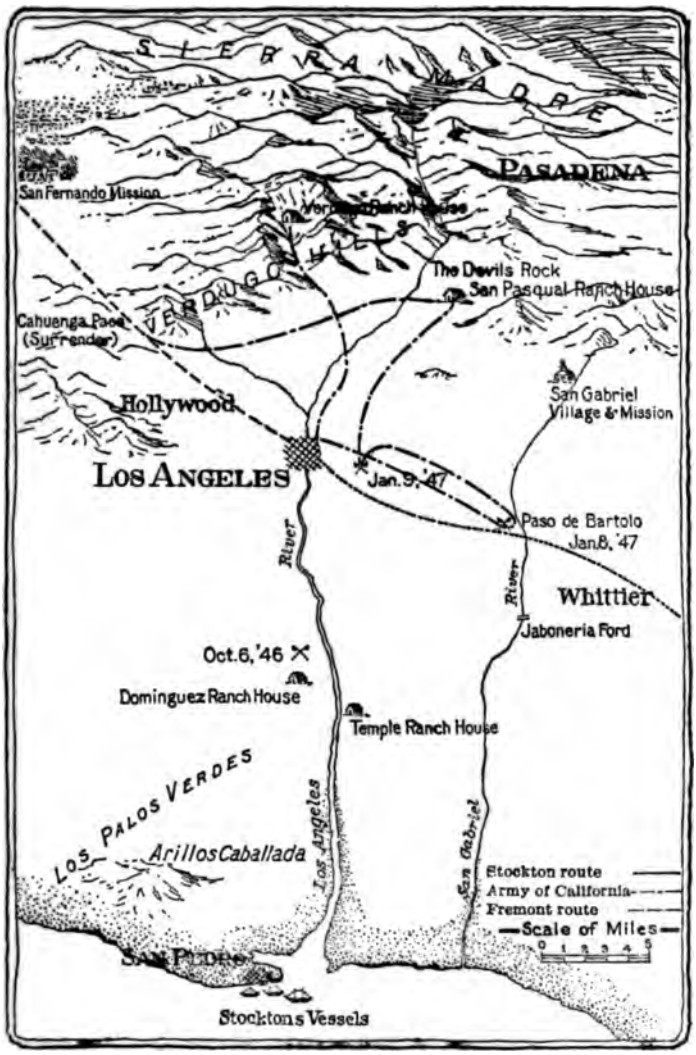








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THE DONS
OF THE
OLD PUEBLO

By

PERCIVAL J. COONEY

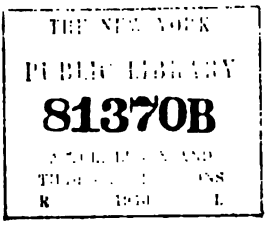
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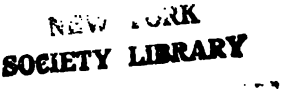
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THE PREFACE

AS has been said of another and a better historical novel, "To the historian this tale may seem but an idle romance; to the lover of romance, but the marshaled incidents of history."

Be that as it may, in the hearts of those who love the smiling vales and azure skies of the Golden State there will ever be a throb of kindly sympathy for the gentle, chivalrous race that once lived a life of Arcadian simplicity amid these scenes now tumultuous with the myriad activities of modern civilization.

That we failed to understand them, and they us, was neither their fault nor ours, but due to differences deep down in the natures of both races. In the last war with Mexico, and the acquisition of California, much is there that the American of to-day would fain forget, and much that we can remember now with pride. And of the latter not the least is the gallant, hopeless effort of a people, struggling against overwhelming odds to hold the land of their fathers.

Soon, very soon, are we to come into much closer contact with the peoples of the Latin nations to the south. Well, indeed, will it be for us, and for them, if we remember that we are not better,—not superior, —only different. Our Viking vigor is not theirs; neither are their virtues ours.

In all that pertains to modern industrialism the Anglo-Celt will lead, as he has done for centuries. But much may he learn from the Latin races of kindliness of heart and speech, of poiseful dignity, of the graceful, gentler art of living.

THE AUTHOR

Los Angeles, May 1, 1914



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DON JOSÉ ANTONIO ARILLO

THE DONS OF THE OLD PUEBLO

CHAPTER I

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

CLEARER and clearer came the ringing bugle notes, the rattle of kettledrums, the clank of artillery, and the low tumult of many marching feet.

Over the adobe-built pueblo of Los Angeles brooded a strange stillness. Neither resistance nor welcome marked the invasion. The city was silent, but it seemed an incidental rather than an awed quietude, as if the sleepy pueblo had prolonged its midday siesta far into the evening hour. It was the twelfth day of August, 1846; Stockton and Fremont were leading their dusty columns against an apathetic community which believed little harm would come with the advent of the American flag.

Neither spirit nor material was there left in the city for even a show of resistance, the ragged levies of the governor were disbanded, the Indians and peons had betaken themselves to the hills above the plaza, and while a few of the more timorous among the *gente de razon* had left quietly for their country *ranchos*, the majority



had remained in the pueblo and were now gathered at casement and window, awaiting with curiosity the coming of the Americans.

With the older men, though occasionally might be heard a word of regret at the passing of Mexican sovereignty, there was generally a calm acceptance of a conquest long recognized as inevitable, but among the younger generation, hotter headed and less philosophical, was apparent a silent sullenness that boded ill for the future peace of the sleepy, sun-parched city.

The house of Arillo haughtily gave no sign. Though it was a day pregnant with portents of the future for Don José Antonio Arillo, there was no anxiety in his calm face as he idly scanned the columns of a tattered and much bethumbed Mexican newspaper.

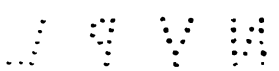
"Madre de Dios," murmured Señora Arillo, "is it so, that they are really here — at last — the Americans? What shall we do, José Antonio?"

"Calm thyself, mother. There is naught to fear," he replied, with the ready optimism of his race.

"But the Commandant Castro and his soldiers — there will be shooting in the streets?"

Señor Arillo's quiet, indulgent smile was tinged with a trace of amusement.

"No; there will be no shooting. The bold Commandant Castro and the brave Governor



Pico, alike, are now on the highroad to the south. With the wisdom of the mole, they have buried their cannons, that the Americans might not find them when they come."

He was a handsome man, with shining black hair, and dark beard which he stroked thoughtfully with his slender white fingers as he spoke. As he lolled in the easy-chair, attired in a heavily frilled white shirt, drooping red sash, black velvet knee breeches, with white stockings and shoes brightly buckled, he was as good a type as the time could yield of the Californian gentleman of the day. In his finely chiseled, sensitive face and large, heavy-lidded black eyes was the calm contentment of the man who is at peace with the world and his own soul—the easy assurance of one to whom life has been kind.

At her husband's mention of the cannon the señora's lips twitched tremulously, and her drooping head, bent over her lacework, hid a crafty smile. Then her gaze wandered through the back window to the far corner of the patio, where a roughly clad man was busily engaged setting rosebushes in a plot of freshly broken ground.

"Santa Maria,"—she seemed talking now to screen her thoughts,—"I know not what the world is coming to. The times change, José Antonio, and the people change with them, and

not for the better. I do remember well, how, when a little girl, I saw my brothers — four of them — march away to fight the Spaniards, and but two came back. And now, por Dios! our commandant and our governor flee, and strike not one blow for the land. Ah," she repeated, "the times are not what they were — nor the people."

"They must not be blamed, mother. There was neither money, arms, nor clothing for the soldiers. Let us be charitable. It was not that Governor Pico was afraid; he fled that the name of Pico might not be disgraced by surrender."

The door was flung wide open.

"The Americans—they are here?"

The girl's face was bright with excitement, and her whole body seemed aquiver with a fear so exhilarating that the very entertaining of it was an enjoyable sensation.

Black were her eyes—black as the long lashes that fringed their velvet depths, black as the silky sheen of her raven tresses. The cherry tint of her curving lips, the crimson glow in her olive cheeks, but echoed back the vivid red of the single rose in her hair.

It was for such as she that Spain became the garden of chivalry. The land she had never seen had given her a heritage of beauty, of the type

which generations before had inspired armored knights and joyous troubadours. Soul-thrilled painters, singers, and sculptors had seen such as she in their mind's ideal only to despair of reproduction on canvas, in verse, or in marble.

Full-blooded girlhood was hers, toned by the reserve of the woodland fawn; flood-tiding vivacity, held in check by the gentility of generations; witchery of the coquette, subdued by the overpowering honor of womanhood.

The Don rose and kissed Loreto on the forehead, lingering a moment to touch her hair caressingly. It was not unusual for him to be affectionate with his daughter, but to-day something of sadness marked his demeanor, as though it had the chastening spirit of a farewell.

But the girl scintillated with the exuberance of youth. Sadness and she were strangers. Her bosom heaved, her lips bowed, her bare arms dimpled with all the tantalizing fullness of youth, and her eyes danced with vibrating youth's myriad fascinations.

Don José Antonio turned in his easy, graceful way, and stepping to the outside door opening on the plaza, closed and barred it.

"Keep within, all of you. Keep the doors and windows barred and closed, all but one. Here we will look out. The Americans mean well, I believe, but their ways are not our ways, and

it may be that there are rough and ungodly men among them."

Turning a bend of the roadway, the head of the column swung into full view, and heralding it the blare of the band flooded the drowsy square. Vaingloriously it clashed to the inner recesses of mansion and hut, as though boasting of the bloodless and inconsequent triumph. Arillo smiled at the grotesqueness of the situation. What a fanfare for such an undisputed conquest!

Leading the column, three horsemen entered the plaza; then, marching four abreast, their short muskets aslant on their shoulders, came the solid squares of sailors, clean and natty in their uniforms of white and blue. After them, from out a cloud of yellow dust, the slow-swaying oxen dragged the trundling guns.

"Ah, the sailors from the American war ships. They march well for seafaring men," said Don José Antonio as he peered through the partly opened shutters.

"Who are those behind the sailors? They look so fierce and wild," questioned Loreto, gazing over her father's shoulder.

At the head of the second division rode a tall man on a great black horse, his battered slouch hat well down over his thin, bearded face. Behind him, their rifles slung over their backs or resting across their saddles, came a motley group in

uncouth garb. Keen-eyed men they were, with unshaven faces and with uncut hair straggling over their shoulders. Their frilled buckskin jerkins, with here and there a faded blue woolen shirt, their caps of coyote skins, the tails drooping behind, bespoke the frontiersman, the plainsman, and the fur trader.

Arillo's face darkened as they filed past his home.

"Fremont and his 'Bears,'" he muttered. "It was they who began the war in the north."

The three horsemen rode slowly over to the lower end of the plaza, where the Mexican tricolor with its Aztec eagle drooped in the quiet air. A sailor stepped from the ranks and with a jerk of his wrist brought it fluttering to the ground. There was no one to dispute the act. Señora Arillo sobbed, and turned away from the window. The Don's eyes were thoughtful, but he was silent as the banner of the stars fluttered upward.

Wild ringing cheers from the Americans in the plaza, repeated again and again, and then the band struck up a clamorous strain of triumphant music. The conquest of the Pacific coast was complete; all of California had become an American possession.

With the curiosity of her sex, the girl leaned from the window, all intent on the group near the flagstaff. So deeply interested was she that

when she turned it was to look suddenly and directly into the eyes of an American officer who, during the maneuvering, had quietly stopped his horse close to the veranda.

Erect, handsome, and well groomed, there was in his fresh young face, buoyant with the ease of perfect physical health, an expression of pleasing affability, somewhat in contrast with the air of cool self-reliance and quiet determination suggested by the deeply cleft chin, set strongly under his heavy blond mustache. Perplexed with deep thought, he was almost frowning under his visored cap when his gaze uprose to meet that of the girl. At once his deep blue eyes beamed with an artist's pleasure at the sight of sudden and unexpected beauty, and yet he was not guilty of even the semblance of a smile.

Instinctively his hand touched his hat in respectful salute, and deferentially he reined his horse away. The startled girl closed the shutter with a snap that seemed almost vicious in its haste. He stared at the closed window for a moment, and then passed on reluctantly toward the Plaza Church.

"May the good God grant that they do not take our house for their headquarters," muttered Don José Antonio.

Lieutenant Jack Carroll said to himself, "By Gad!"

Back to the open plaza flocked the people; from the hill came the Indians and peons, their brown faces lighting up with pleasure as in excited groups they listened to the music and watched the sailors building their fires and making preparations for the evening meal. After all, the Americans appeared to be harmless, and with an immense relief the pueblo went about its business, for though a new flag waved over the city of Our Lady of the Angels, there were the cornfields to be hoed and watered from the *acequias* on the morrow, and the ripe peaches in the orchards along the river were almost ready for the picking.

Slowly the blue of the encircling hills faded to wondrous tints of mauve and lavender. Behind the rugged range-top the sun, a sharp-edged disk of gold, slid silently out of sight amid a bursting radiance of orange and crimson, flaring up to the arched blue. Softly the slow-rising moon silver-showered the clustering dark roofs and the open plaza, the blanketed forms of the sleeping men, the dark group of tethered horses shuffling restlessly, and the figures of the sentries as they moved silently back and forth. Near the dark front of the church the polished brass of the cannon gleamed with a golden luster amid a tangle of wheels. From the distant ocean a wandering breeze caught the drooping flag, tossed it erect

for a moment, then let it fall limply to the staff.

The occupation of Los Angeles was complete.

Lieutenant Carroll turned away for a stroll in the quiet night. His responsive heart warmed at the memory of the incident before Arillo's window, for aside from the romance of it his artist's mind was thrilled with the vision of the girl's entrancing beauty.

"Wouldst know thy future, señor? Wouldst know thy future?"

A blind and withered Indian woman sat on a doorstep, garbed in rags and surrounded by sundry evidences of squalor.

The lieutenant dropped a bit of silver into her palm,— the first, perhaps, she had possessed in many a day.

"God took my eyes, but to me the Holy Mother makes the future clear," she explained in guttural Spanish, with exclamations of the most profuse gratitude.

"Good stranger," she said, as she held his hand, "alas that one so generous should suffer so. Thy heart shall be crushed as by a stone, and blood shall smear thy path. The great hearts whom thou reverest shall be humbled; she who loves thee shall pray for thy death. Sad, sad, and long is the way, and filled with woe."

"It is fortunate that at this particular time no

one loves me," soliloquized Carroll, with an amused smile.

"Thy heart shall be crushed as by a stone. The sunlight will come only to be followed by the night of sorrow. Friendship shall walk in clanking chains. Fools shall make strife, and villains shall prosper. Thy heart shall be crushed as by a stone," she repeated, as though chanting a litany.

The woman's upturned, sightless eyeballs, the mystic import of her singsong words, touched a superstitious Celtic chord somewhere deep down in the man's soul.

"In God's name, good woman, cease!" he cried, as he snatched away his hand.

"Stay, and hear all—stay—"

"I will not," said Carroll. "That's grief enough for a peso."

The sound of a half-suppressed chuckle caused him to turn his head, to find himself gazing unexpectedly into the eyes of a stout, broad-shouldered man whose square, rugged countenance, seen in the light of the lantern on the veranda post, was twisted in contemptuous scorn, evidently at the American's apparent credulity.

The lieutenant's cool gaze took in the details of the stranger's appearance, the hard protuberant blue eyes set close under jutting brows, the massive mould of his features, the shaggy aureole

of blond hair, in strange contrast with the coppery glow of his cheek.

Irritated by the unspoken insolence of the man's scrutiny, Carroll was about to speak when the listener, the aggravating sneer still on his heavy mouth, shrugged his shoulders indifferently and strode away.

That night, wearied by the long march of the day, the lieutenant dropped quickly to sleep, but it was a sleep of strange, distorted dreams, in which two faces came and went in tumultuous confusion,—the gladdening memory of the girl at the casement and the lowering visage of the unknown eavesdropper. Ever through the fleeting mirage of his visions floated the fancied croonings of the Indian woman.

"Thy heart shall be crushed as by a stone. Friendship shall walk in chains. Sad and long is the way, and filled with woe."

CHAPTER II

LIEUTENANT JOHN CARROLL

"Oh, the time I've spent in wooing,
In loving and pursuing
The light that lies in women's eyes
Has been my heart's undoing."

LIEUTENANT JACK CARROLL, arranging papers at an improvised table on the broad veranda inside the adobe-walled inclosure where the Americans had established headquarters, lilted to himself in the tone of a man to whom the sound of his own voice is pleasing. He tied a stubborn knot on a bundle of parchment, laid it down, and resumed merrily,

"When gloomy science sought me,
I scorned the lore she brought me,
My only books were woman's looks,—"

He folded a map carefully, placed it in a drawer, and then concluded,

"And—folly's—all they've—taught me."

But Jack Carroll's undoing had not been a very serious affair, and there was far more of mirthful wisdom than youthful folly in his handsome young face—a face that radiated health, heartiness, and happiness.

Occupied with the routine work of the post, he had not noticed the approach of a sumptuously

garbed man who had entered the stockade. The newcomer was attired in the height of Mexican fashion,— bell-mouthed trousers of black broadcloth, open on the side and laced to the knee, short rounded jacket of blue velvet bright with gold braid, a flowing crimson sash, and wide curved-brimmed sombrero heavy with silver filagree. Over his shoulder hung gracefully the long folds of a dark blue *serape*.

The Californian glanced inquiringly at Commodore Stockton, who had just stepped out on the veranda. Then his grave face returned Carroll's genial smile.

"Have I the honor of addressing the American commander?" he asked in Spanish, with a formal bow.

The commodore, a large-faced man with graying tufts of hair in front of his ears and a high, arched nose, eyed the stranger's rich raiment with an insolent stare.

"What is this gorgeous individual saying, lieutenant?" he inquired, turning to Carroll.

The young officer rose, and returned the Californian's bow. "Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?" he asked in fluent Spanish.

"Don José Antonio Arillo, formerly *alcalde*, of the pueblo."

"Oh, explain that to him," broke in the commodore, waving his hands toward the papers on

the table, "and tell him to come around with his friends to-morrow and sign the paroles."

"The commodore wishes me—pardon me, señor, be seated," went on Carroll,—"to explain to you the purpose and meaning of the parole which you and the other principal men of the pueblo are expected to sign. I shall read it for you.

" 'The undersigned hereby agrees, and binds himself under his parole of honor, not to serve against the military forces of the United States, nor to give aid and comfort to its enemies.'

"It is our intention," he continued, "to have all those who have in any way or at any time been connected with civil or military power under the late government of California sign this parole. In return we have the honor to assure you that your properties and persons shall be respected. We only ask that the laws be observed. All laws shall remain the same as before, except only for the exigencies of military rule. We should be pleased to have you assist in communicating the desires and intentions of our commander to your people."

"With much pleasure shall I do so," said Arillo, with his habitual grave dignity. "I can speak for many—for most—when I say that among our people there is no discontent. Anything is better than the never-ending revolutions and

meaningless disturbances of the last few years. I do not exaggerate, señor, when I state that among the *gente de razon* your coming is not unwelcome, and I—"

Stockton interrupted his flow of sonorous Castilian.

"What is he saying, lieutenant? My Spanish is rusty."

"He says the Spanish people are glad we are here."

"Humph," remarked the commodore. "I'll believe that when we recover those cannon Castro made away with."

Arillo turned his great dark eyes half scornfully on Stockton; then, frowning a little, he bade Carroll a courteous farewell, and walked slowly out the stockade gate.

The lieutenant leaned back in his chair and gazed dreamily at the sunlit square of the stockade. Incidents of the past few days, though seemingly monotonous, had been eventful to him at least. In the still air of the City of the Angels he seemed to feel the presence of an overwhelming fate.

But yesterday he had attended mass at the Plaza Church, and an event which under ordinary circumstances would have seemed trivial had been the occasion of setting his whole being a-tingle with romantic expectancy. His erect figure, clad in its uniform of blue, was the object of

many curious glances from the Californians as, kneeling with them on the stone floor of the seatless church, he dreamily followed the service, his mind very busy with the tender memories of long-gone years. These came very close and very clear to him as he knelt there, the well-remembered chants of the mother of all churches, the same in every land and every age, sounding strangely familiar in his ears.

The service ended, he again bent his knee in the aisle as he had done in the far-off days of his boyhood, and turned to find himself gazing into a pair of wondrous black eyes—eyes wide open, luring, appealing, questioning, yet serious with a tinge of wistful melancholy. For a brief, fleeting moment they held him fast with their rapt intensity,—a look of interest that was almost admiring, that sent his veins tingling to his finger tips. Then with a quick little movement, full of infinite grace, the girl drew the black mantilla closer around her head, and was lost in the slowly moving crowd.

As the lieutenant now strolled slowly toward the stockade gate there rose before him again the girl's rapturous eyes, the tiny tendrils of curling hair on her temples, and the deep shadows beneath her lashes as her glance had fallen before his. There was something in them that eluded him, a something in the slight upward tilt of the brows.

Surely, it was a gleam of recognition? Where had those eyes looked into his before, not with longing, inquiring gaze, but with startled dismay? Then with a sudden illuminating flash came the memory of the face that had vanished from the window the day the troops arrived in the pueblo.

"You're lookin' mighty solemn, lieutenant."

Carroll looked up to meet the quizzical eyes of a tall frontiersman in buckskin coat, who was doing sentry duty at the stockade gate.

"Hello, Jim Marshall," he said, cordially, "what do you know to-day?"

Between the warm-hearted young lieutenant and the grizzled trapper had sprung up a warm and sudden liking. Alone in one another's company, their conversation was marked by a familiarity which ignored the formalities usual between an officer and an enlisted man.

"Wa-all," drawled Jim, after a hurried glance about him, "this war ain't run quite to suit me. The weather's a trifle warm, rations ain't exactly a Paris menoo, our boys is drinkin' too much wine, the fleas is workin' overtime, the commodore ain't been givin' me his entire coöperation. Still, I call this pueblo a fair to middlin' place. Now these high-class greasers has pretty good stuff in them."

Carroll suppressed a chuckle.

"Yes, siree. Thar's that old sport, Señor

Arillo, that was in here this afternoon, the gent with the silver dewdads on his clothes. I'll bet he's all right. Why, say, George Washington himself didn't have it any over him on dignity. Pretty swell people, that family. Ever met any of the rest of them?" Marshall's grin was emphatically roguish.

"I haven't had that pleasure."

"Well, lieutenant, let me tell you something. That 'ere family owns the ten-thousand-dollar beauty of this camp. This Miss Arillo has the young bucks around here all loony. They're all ready to throw their hats and their hearts on the ground for her to walk on, and she don't see nary one of them.

"You betcha, this girl is a primmy dona and a Circassian beauty all rolled into one. You see, according to the custom of this country these flowers is born to blush unkissed, as it were. There ain't no goin' to see yer gal here, an' sittin' up an' spoonin' after the old folks goes to bed, like back in the States. I wuz over thar in the alley — wuz doin' some carpenter work for the captain that day, beyond the plaza, pullin' a beam out of an old adobe that didn't belong to no one in particular, when I sees her on the verandy — that's the house you nearly rode yer hoss into the day we arriv'. But, as I wuz sayin', no one minds an old grizzly like me, so I gets as many

looks as I kin at her out of the tail of my eye, and say, lieutenant, that girl is sure a humdinger."

Quite carried away by his own eloquence, Marshall continued, "Why, if I wasn't already a family man, with one squaw jerkin' venison and buffalo meat for me in a tepee up on the Snake River, and another on the Truckee, an' if I was twenty years younger, it would be me for Miss Arillo."

Carroll started like one awakened from sleep. This was the girl at the window, the señorita he had seen at mass. He had met her father this afternoon.

"Yes, siree," continued Marshall, "you'd see me under her window with a banjo or a fiddle, or sumthin' that 'ud make music, rippin' her heart's strings out with bars from 'Pop Goes the Weasel,' or 'Turkey in the Straw,' or sumthin'. Yes, siree, and nuthin' short of a kettle of bilin' water or a blunderbuss loaded with nails would keep me from movin' right into the Arillo family an' campin'. After she'd give me the peace sign, or throwed me a kiss or sumthin', I'd walk right up to the front door an' rap, an' if the old man opened it I'd stick my foot in so's he could n't close it, and say, 'Mister Arillo, me an' yer darter is plumb engaged, and ye may as well get used to it."

"Marshall," asked Carroll with a grim smile, "do you think I could sing a serenade?"

"You ain't strong on melodiousness, that's a fact, lieutenant, but derned if I wouldn't like to see you have a stack of chips in this game somehow."

CHAPTER III

A CRY IN THE DARK

"DARKNESS comes already," said Señorita Loreto Arillo as she drew her *rebozo* around her, and rose to her feet. "Surely have I stayed too late." She had indeed lingered long at the home of her good aunt, Doña Chonita.

"Santa Maria, child! Thou wilt not venture out alone? Wait a few minutes, and Don Fernando will arrive and he will escort thee. There are always these noisy Americans, shouting and drinking beyond the plaza. I can hear them often at night over by the wine shops. Por Dios, but they are a strange people!"

Loreto seated herself on the bench by the window, and for a moment was silent as she nervously plaited a fold in her skirt. Then she said in a low tone, her face filling with a soft, dreamy light:

"Ah, Tia Chonita, they are not all like that."

"That I do not know. Let us hope not. But they are rough and uncouth—those that I have seen."

The girl smiled with the confident wisdom of youth. Her aunt was old-fashioned, and there was much that she did not know.

"But, Tia, I must go. Mother will be troubled. Have no fear for me."

"Child, child, I will not have thee venture out. Dost thou hear that?" she added, as a long-drawn howl came from the wine shops across the plaza. "And then, who knows, thou mightst chance to meet the Black Matador. It is on such nights as these—starlit, without a moon—that, it is said, he walks abroad."

Loreto's shoulder quivered in a delicious little shiver, half fear, half youthful curiosity.

"Tia mine, tell me of him. Often I hear him spoken of. Didst thou ever see him?"

"Thanks to the saints, no, never; but my mother, yes. Forty years ago it was, Loreto, when a new governor came from Mexico City, bringing with him many fine young gentlemen and officers in gay clothes. I was only a little girl, but well do I remember how for two whole weeks they held *fiesta*, with balls at the government house and bull fights in the old ring beyond your home to the north of the church. With the governor came he who was known as the Black Matador, for, unlike other matadors, he was not dressed in gay colors, but always in black. Handsome he was, but, oh, so sad, for it was said that a fair lady in far-off Spain had refused his love, and that his heart was breaking for love of her. A silent man he was, and spoke but little, and his

grieving eyes never answered the warm glances of the many beautiful señoritas who looked with kindness upon him.

"Never in the bull ring was hand so sure or eye so true as his, and they said of him—the ladies that watched him with kindness in their eyes—that his somber garb was but the outward sign of his broken heart. Many bulls he killed, always with that one, swift, sure stroke, but when he looked up at the wild huzzas and the flowers that rained down upon him, there was no pride or joy in his pale face. He saw the coming of his fate, it is believed, for on the day that he died he made confession of all his life to Father Linares. How it happened it is hard to tell. Some say that he stood as one in a dream; others, that his hand was not sure, and that he missed his stroke, for the bull caught him on his horns and tossed him high in the air, while the men groaned and the women covered their faces with their hands. Then the big beast trampled his black figure into the sand, and when they picked him up, his face was gone—no sign of features was there left!

"Ah, how my mother would shudder when she told the tale! Buried he was in the Campo Santo to the north, but he does not sleep well, for many a time he has been seen, but always, always, is his face covered with the corner of his

black cloak, as if he willed that no man should see it."

"And thy mother really saw him?"

"She did, indeed. One dark night by the church, with his flat, old-fashioned hat, and his face covered with the corner of his cloak. But never could she be brought to speak of it, for the very memory of it made her face go pale. And often have I heard that he has appeared to others. Always, always, his coming means grief and sorrow, so pray the Virgin, child, that you may never see him. There, there, truly I am but a foolish, prattling old woman, telling thee such tales," she added, as she noted Loreto's wide-eyed gaze. "Wait thee! Don Fernando must arrive soon."

But Don Fernando did not come, and as the night wore on, Loreto recovered from her superstitious thrill, and announced her intention of going.

"I must go, Tia Chonita. Mother does not know where I am. Have no fear for me. It is but a step up the street to the plaza, and from there a smart run will bring me to my own door."

There was no moon, but it was clear and cloudless, the blue arch overhead scintillating with quivering stars. Not a figure showed in the shadowy breadth of the open square. Tripping lightly down the steps, she hurried silently to the

entrance of the plaza, and then, with a wildly beating heart, she raced toward the veranda of her own home, dimly seen in the darkness.

Out of the shadows lurched a shambling figure; a hand caught her shoulder, and a rough voice gurgled in her ear in badly accented Spanish:

"Don't hurry so, little one."

She screamed in terror, and throwing off the rebozo, which the man held firmly in his grasp, she tried to dart away, but it was caught in the fastening of the brooch at her neck. The man laughed gleefully as, holding it in one hand, he stepped toward her.

Close at hand and out of the darkness came a tall man. Loreto saw dimly the forward thrust of his shoulders, the stiffening of his neck and head, and heard the vicious smack of knuckles meeting flesh and bone. The ruffian tottered to the ground; then he scrambled to his feet and, with a roar like a bellowing bull, threw himself on the newcomer, belching brutal oaths. Like two pistol shots John Carroll's two fists landed full and fair on his face and jaw. With a shudder of pain, the man sank again to the ground, this time motionless.

For a moment the girl clung to Carroll's arm, sobbing hysterically; then, as she glanced upward through the tears glistening on her cheeks, the light of recognition came into her eyes, though

the darkness hid the rosy blushes that mantled her face.

"Oh-h-h!" There was relief and gladness in her voice.

"Do not fear, señorita; he will give you no further trouble," he said, as he passed his arm around her slender form.

Carroll's heart was pounding wildly, and his lips were hot and moistureless, for he had seen in the velvet eyes upturned to his in the starlight the complete surrender that the woman of the Latin races yields only to the man who has won her heart. In that moment he knew Loreto Arillo was his.

"Señor—señor," she protested, "you must not, you must not," and her slight fingers pushed at his encircling arm, for she was a Spanish girl with all the traditionary reserve of her people.

"No, señorita." He held her now more firmly, and she became more resigned. "You are trembling, and can hardly stand."

Her eyes were closed; she was trembling, but her trembling now was not of fear; it was the quiver of a virgin heart at a lover's first embrace.

He threw the door open and, as he did so, Señora Arillo appeared, a lighted candle in her hand. At the sight of her daughter clinging close to the blue uniform of an American, she screamed in horror, bringing Don José Antonio

rushing into the room, his usually placid face full of alarm.

"Take your hands off my child," Señora Arillo cried.

But Loreto threw herself on her mother's breast, sobbing—sobs that broke into half-hysterical laughter.

"Mother, mother, speak not so to him. He saved me from a man, an awful man, who tore my rebozo off in the darkness," and she hid her flushed face on her mother's arm.

Don José Antonio was the first to grasp the situation. In Carroll he recognized the courteous young officer of the headquarters, and his face lighted with pleasure. Grasping the soldier's hand with both of his, he pressed it warmly, and said in a voice full of feeling:

"I can find no words, believe me, señor, to express our thanks and gratitude for your gallant conduct. You are indeed welcome to our home, now and always. It is all yours, señor. Señora Ruiz de Arillo, my wife, Lieutenant Carroll."

The señora gave him her hand, and her words echoed her husband's warm thanks and courteous greeting.

"Ah, señora," said the American, as he bowed over her hand, "I see plainly now why your daughter is so beautiful. She is so by the divine right of inheritance."

The look of hesitating distrust fled, and her full, rounded, matronly face beamed with pleasure. For the days when Señora Arillo, then Señorita Ruiz, was the "favorita" of the pueblo, though twenty years agone, were to her, as they would be to any woman, of precious memory. And truly, in the dark, prideful face, and figure, straight and erect, there was still much of the beauty that had set aflame the hearts of men in the days of the past.

"Ah, Señor Carroll, you flatter—almost like a Californian. You make it hard for us to believe you are an American."

"There are times, indeed, señora, when I am almost ashamed to be an American. No, not that—I will not say that; but rather, that there are some Americans of whom I am truly ashamed."

"True, señor," said Arillo gravely. "There are both good and bad among all nations. The devil has his own everywhere."

Carroll glanced at his watch, and rose to go. "I am almost due at the post," he said reluctantly, "and it is late."

"A moment, señor; do not hasten away."

Don José Antonio clapped his hands, and a servant appeared with wine.

"To our better acquaintance, Señor Carroll," he said as he raised his glass, "and may we have

the very great pleasure of seeing you often in our home."

"The pleasure will, for me, indeed be great, Señor Arillo," replied Carroll seriously, and he looked into the eyes of the girl, whose answering gaze met his without evasion.

He rose to go, and as he took Loreto's hand in his he raised it boldly to his lips. Childishly she hid her face against her mother's arm. He met the señora's look of displeasure with one of resolute, good-natured defiance. In the custom of the land and of the time, he was now an avowed suitor for the hand of Loreto Arillo.

"Truly a fine young man, that," observed Don José Antonio as he lighted a long black cigar and resumed his seat at the table. "How well he speaks Castilian,— with just the slightest trace of accent."

Señora Arillo was in a brown study. All too plainly she had read the telltale look in her daughter's face, and the proud but kindly defiance and glad confidence in the blue eyes of Carroll. Her position, her power as a mother, had been ignored. Her irritation grew; her face became firm and hard.

"It is sad to think such a fine young man is a heretic," she said, purposely mimicking her husband's words.

"Ah! but mother, he is not," protested Loreto, her face flushed with eager gladness.

"How dost thou know, child? What hast thou had to do with him?" she questioned sharply.

"Nothing, mother," she said, ignoring the first part of the question. Her eyes were lit with sudden mischief.

"How knowest thou he is not a heretic, child? Hast thou spoken with him anywhere before?"

"I have never spoken to Señor Carroll before to-night. Oh, mother, what a man he is! How, 'Bing, bing,' and he fell like a dead tree. It was over," she prattled merrily.

Her mother's eyes were still regarding her suspiciously. "Where hast thou seen this Señor Carroll before? Tell me at once."

"At mass, mother."

"That is nothing, thou foolish girl. He goes like other heretics, out of curiosity—perchance to mock at the pictures of the holy saints. And that makes thee think him a Catholic? Bah! And thou hast dared to cast thine eyes toward him—an American and a heretic."

Don José Antonio took his cigar from his mouth and laughed,—a hearty, ringing laugh.

"Ah, mother, mother! Are the memories of all the daughters of Eve as short as thine? 'Tis even as thine eyes strayed many a time, and little thou cared in those days whether or not he at whom thou glanced was a heretic or no."

"There were no heretics in California in those

days. The times are changed, and not for the better."

"He is not a heretic," persisted Loreto, her face full of mischief, but her head held low as she idly twisted a silken ribbon in her white fingers.

"But how knowest thou? Speak; has he told thee?"

"I told thee that I have never exchanged words with him before to-night," she said, with exasperating slowness.

"Loreto," snapped her mother, "thou wouldst try the patience of a saint. Tell me how thou knowest, or thou shalt be sent to bed."

"When a man bends his head at the ringing of the mass bell, even as we do, he can be no heretic," she replied, her triumphant gaze searching her mother's face.

"Ah, is it so?" said Don José Antonio with interest. It was plain that the news was not unwelcome to him. "I do not doubt it, and I do not marvel now that I liked him from the first."

But Señora Arillo was stubbornly incredulous. "Never, never, have I known of an American who was a Catholic. Frenchmen, yes; Germans, Irishmen, even Englishmen have I heard of who were of the true faith — but Americans, never. I do not believe it. No, he is a sharp young man, and polite, — that I can see, — so in church he does

just as the others do. 'T is graceful of him, and admirable."

"He is no heretic," persisted Loreto. "Hadst thou seen him, thou wouldst know he was at home in the church."

And for Carroll, walking back through the night to the stockade, there was no darkness. Around him shone the light that never was on land or sea, and within his soul were singing secret melodies, of joy and hope and gladness unutterable. One thought filled his whole being; he purposed to possess Loreto Arillo as his wife.

CHAPTER IV

THE SON OF LEO THE STRANGER

CAPTAIN ARCHIBALD GILLIE, left by Stockton in command at Los Angeles, was a man whose every thought and action was regulated by a straight line. He arose at the same moment every morning, and punctually retired at the same hour every night, with religious regularity. Every hour of the day was devoted to some specific duty, and to no other. Born and raised in a little New England town, of stern old witch-burning stock, he had all their ancient narrowness but none of the facile quality of ready adaptability that has been the saving grace, in all lands and in all times, of the sons of the Puritan and Pilgrim. To him the silent, poiseful dignity of the men of the *gente de razon* was but the sulkiness of a conquered race, and their colorful garb but petty childishness. Like the average man of the English-speaking world, he despised and distrusted those of a darker race, and to him there was but little distinction between the Dons in the pueblo, who proudly traced their descent from the *conquistadores* of Cortéz, and the blanketed Indian herders from the sunburnt plains.

Much to his gratification, two of the guns



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LOS ANGELES "OUR LADY QUEEN OF THE ANGELS" 1849-50



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concealed by Castro before his hurried flight were recovered. The former officers of Castro's little army, all residents of the pueblo, who had been in hiding at their *ranchos* in the country, returned one by one and without any objections gave their paroles not to bear arms again against the United States. In charge of the taking of the paroles, thus bringing him into touch with all the leading men of the pueblo, was Lieutenant John Carroll, formerly of the Marine Corps. Between the sensitive dignity of the people and the gruff brusqueness of Captain Gillie, Carroll's tactful personality and his command of Castilian, acquired during many years' residence in Cuba, stood always as a buffer, though of this fact the captain, with his customary obtuseness, was utterly unaware.

Gillie's first official act was the posting of a proclamation demanding the surrender of all arms and ammunition to the American authorities. Gatherings of people, either public or private, were forbidden, save where a special permit had been given. The inhabitants were warned to keep within doors after sunset, and the proclamation ended with a sweeping injunction against any "conduct prejudicial to good morals." Proclamations, however, were nothing new to the people of the pueblo. They read, smiled amiably, and went their ways much as usual.

As the captain sat at a paper-strewn table in his office in one of the rooms in the long adobe to the right of the open stockade, his tight-fitting blue jacket buttoned close, though the day was sweltering, his narrow back stiffly erect, the single lock of graying hair carefully smoothed across his bald head, he was the very embodiment of military exactitude. As he wrote, his hand plucked restlessly at his nervous underlip. Suddenly he put down his pen, glanced at his watch, and stepping to the door, spoke to the sentry:

"It is ten o'clock. Brooks, notify the sergeant to bring from the guardhouse the prisoners arrested last night."

The marine saluted, marched across the sunny square of the stockade, and in a few minutes returned with a score of prisoners. Lieutenant Carroll appeared from the next room and, pen in hand, took his place at the table. He was followed in a moment by Second Lieutenant Somers, a somber-faced man with a bushy head of ruddy hair, and a world of melancholy in his deep-set gray eyes. Here, daily, Captain Gillie, as provost marshal under military rule, disposed of the numerous cases brought before him.

Among the accused were young men who, guitar in hand, had been arrested under the windows of their señoritas; others, whose sole offense was that they had attended a family gathering for

the celebration of a christening; *vaqueros* from the ranchos, absent from the pueblo for months, who had innocently ridden into town with pistols in their sashes; Indians, picked up intoxicated on the street by the provost guard; and peons, their eyes still red from last night's debauch.

Captain Gillie's interpretation of the proclamation was harsh and literal, his penalties prompt and severe. Dumb with amazement, the prisoners were led away to serve their sentences in the guardhouse of the post.

When the last of the list was disposed of, Lieutenant Carroll sat moodily silent, staring at the opposite wall and biting the ends of his heavy mustache. For some days he had been seriously considering the advisability of boldly suggesting to Captain Gillie the wisdom of modifying his stringent regulations for the governing of the pueblo. But between the hard coldness of the New Englander and Carroll's warm-hearted Celtic temperament there was not only slight sympathy but an unbridgeable chasm. Such action, moreover, would have been a most flagrant breach of military etiquette. The captain was a man who never dreamed of asking for advice, and all of Carroll's many delicately veiled suggestions had not even impinged on his consciousness. Lieutenant Somer's mournful gray eyes looked long and steadily at the captain, but

he said nothing. He was a strangely silent man. During his two weeks' association with Gillie and Carroll he had never addressed them, except in regard to necessary matters of military routine.

The morning had seen but the average grist of petty offenders of the lower class, but several days before a score of the principal Dons of the pueblo had been haled before the captain's court and fined heavily for some trifling infractions of the ordinances. The fines were paid with proud promptitude, but the Californians had left the court room, their eyes flashing with rage, their lips white with suppressed indignation. That the attitude of the people toward the Americans had changed in the last ten days, Carroll was well aware. Their surly demeanor and averted glances told only too plainly that they had come to regard their conquerors with aversion and distrust.

There was trouble, too, within the stockade. With the exception of a dozen marines, the fifty men of Gillie's command were the former Bear Flag rebels; men whom the lure of the Wanderlust had drawn to this western coast; men who had fought the wild Indians of the plains, trapped the wily beaver on the lonely reaches of unnamed streams, and faced death in a hundred forms in distant mountain cañons. Poor material were

they for the rigid military discipline so dear to the captain's heart. His efforts to impress them had been to him a long-drawn agony and to the men a roaring farce. When off duty they were to be found in the low dives and wine shops in Nigger Alley at the southeast corner of the plaza, and hardly a day passed but a dozen or more were dragged, fighting furiously or soddenly stupid, to the guardhouse in the stockade.

Carroll knew something of the Spanish character, its capacity for patient endurance, its easy indolence, and its unspoken contempt for the man of unnecessarily violent speech and action. As he stepped out into the morning sunshine the sound of a roaring, drunken chorus came to him from the direction of the plaza, and he sighed wearily.

As if in echo to his own unspoken thoughts there drifted to him, through an open window across the stockade, the strident voice of Jim Marshall.

"I tell ye, fellahs, the captain don't understand the greasers none,—he don't understand nuthin' but orders. Spanish folks ain't much on startin' a stand-up fight, but they is sure bad medicine if ye rub them the wrong way long enough. If this 'ere thing keeps on, thar'll be hell apoppin' in this old pueblo inside of a month. Good-by, fellahs, I'm goin'!"

A few moments later the lieutenant encountered Marshall at the stockade gate. The frontiersman was leading a horse, burdened with a roll of blankets, from the folds of which the handles of a pick and shovel protruded.

"Why, Jim," queried Carroll, as he eyed the outfit curiously, "where are you going?"

"Jest off to the mountings for a little picnic by myself. An old trapper like me gets kinda restless here in town, with the houses and the people acrowdin' him." Something of embarrassment was evident in Marshall's manner. As he nervously fumbled with the butt of his rifle, his usually straightforward gaze fell before the lieutenant's keen scrutiny.

"I got leave of absence for two days from the captain," he explained, after a moment's hesitation.

"Bring us back some bear meat, Jim," suggested the lieutenant as he turned away.

"Mebbe, mebbe." His leathery face twisted in a curious grin, the frontiersman led his horse on out the gate.

Still smiling at Marshall's unusual demeanor, for it was quite evident the frontiersman had something to conceal, Carroll strolled on idly up the adobe-lined street. Suddenly screams of pain, and the sound of smacking blows on bare flesh, caused him to turn and gaze back toward

the stockade gate, where two horsemen were whirling madly in a cloud of dust.

One, a sturdy, broad-shouldered man, his hand twisted in the mane of the other's mount, was raining blows on the back of a breech-clouted Indian boy. At every slash of the leathern quirt, searing welts appeared on the lad's blood-covered shoulders. The boy himself, clinging weakly to the pommel of his saddle, was shrieking in agony. In his tormenter's harsh brown face was no heat of passion, but cool, deliberate vindictiveness.

In a flash Carroll recognized the massive, square-set body, the head of shaggy blond hair bound about with a red kerchief. It was the surly stranger whose insolent gaze had met his the evening he had hearkened to the idle prophecy of the Indian woman.

Rushing toward them, the American grasped the reins of the stranger's horse, sending it rearing on its haunches.

"Señor, señor," he protested, "you forget yourself."

The blond-haired man raised the quirt menacingly, but the sight of the blue uniform and the steel-like glint in Carroll's eye made him hesitate.

"Por Dios," he protested in a deep bass voice, "the boy is my servant—he has been disobedient. May I not—"

"Since when," came from the lieutenant in cool, cutting tones, "has it been the custom of the *gente de razon* to thus chastise their servants—and in the public streets of the pueblo? To so abuse a defenseless boy is the act of a brute. Ride on, señor," he ordered sternly, "or I will place you under arrest."

Carroll's reference to the *gente de razon* seemed to sting the other to the quick, and his dark face reddened with sudden anger. For a single instant he bent on the American a glance of concentrated malignity, then with a contemptuous toss of his shaggy head he walked his horse on up the street toward the plaza.

Jim Marshall, who had paused but a few yards away to tighten the strap of his pack saddle, had witnessed the encounter with a grim smile.

"Good work, lieutenant," he called, "but ye better take keer of yerself. I've been hearing lots about that yalla-headed greaser. He looks to me as full of poison as a rattler. I'll bet he's a bad one."

An expression of disdain on his usually good-humored face, the lieutenant stood staring thoughtfully toward the plaza, where the blond-haired man had disappeared. He was still speculating as to the identity of the unknown, whose forbidding personality and heartless demeanor

was in such marked contrast to the gentle courtesy of the men of the pueblo, when a cheery voice hailed him from a near-by veranda.

"The day is hot, Señor Lieutenant. Come sit with me."

It was Don Augustin Alvaro, a lean and arid little man with keen crinkled eyes and a scraggly gray mustache. With him, as with many of the foremost Dons of the pueblo, Carroll was on terms of friendly familiarity. For some reason he had taken a strange liking to the ferret-eyed little gentleman, whose dry, ready wit and quaint philosophy made him always an interesting companion.

"Who is the *caballero* with the yellow hair who passed just a moment ago?" queried Carroll, as he took a seat by the old man's side.

"That," said Don Augustin, with a contemptuous shrug, "is Hugo Vanuela of the Rancho San Marino. He is not of the *gente de razon*, señor, but a "mestizo," a half-blood, the son of a foreigner and an Indian woman."

Alvaro stopped for a moment to dip into his snuffbox. Carroll was silent; he knew from Don Augustin's manner that a story was impending.

"I knew the father of this man Vanuela very well. Leo the Stranger, we called him, for strangers were rare in California in those days.

And such a rude, brutal, unmannerly man has never been seen before nor since in California. From his father Leo, Vanuela gets his yellow hair, and, as you have seen to-day, other attributes as well. It is quite a tale, that of Leo and Arillo, and the feud between them."

"Don José Antonio Arillo?"

Alvaro's sharp eyes twinkled a little at the quick interest evident in the lieutenant's query.

"The same — Don José Antonio. Now this Leo," he continued, "was ambitious, clever, and intriguing, and when, during one of our revolutions many years ago, Don José Antonio was exiled to Sonora, Leo by craft obtained possession of Arillo's lands to the east of the pueblo. For four years Leo held them, but when Arillo returned by stealth from Sonora, and with others headed another revolution against the governor, Leo was killed at the great battle of San Fernando. And the new governor gave back to Don José Antonio the rancho of the San Pasqual, which was only just. But it is said that this Vanuela has never forgotten or forgiven the death of his father, nor the loss of the lands, and that he has sworn that he will in time be revenged on Arillo, and will have the rancho for his own again.

"Not that alone, but well known is it among the gossips of the pueblo that but last year Hugo, with the unbelievable effrontery of his father, he

with the blood of the despicable Coahuilas in his veins, asked of Señor Arillo the hand of his daughter in marriage. 'Tis said this, too, has but added fuel to his hate of Don José Antonio.

"He has some measure of wealth, has this man Vanuela, for Leo owned as well the Rancho San Marino, and from there the son sells much cattle, hides, and tallow to the American ships on the coast. Yet is there no man or woman of the *gente de razon* who looks kindly upon him. Like his father, he can never learn the ways of our people. He is violent and masterful. Though Father Estenaga of the Plaza Church laughs at me, yet do I believe," went on Don Augustin, "that Leo, the father of Vanuela, was possessed by the devil or in league with him. There is much reason for so thinking. You will remember, lieutenant, the great rock in the *arroyo* by the giant oak? We rode by it together one afternoon."

Carroll nodded.

"That, señor, is the Devil's Rock—truly a spot accursed. Much feared was it by the Indians before the coming of the padres, and even yet there are but few, be they Indians or of the *gente de razon*, who do not believe it to be loved of the evil one. But of that spot Leo, who feared neither God, man, nor the devil, had no fear. It was his favorite haunt. The old Indians round about the San Pasqual have told me that

they heard the man Leo more than once singing litanies in an unknown tongue to the devil, there in the moonlight."

Alvaro's keen glance noted Carroll's amused smile.

"It may have been so, señor," he protested. "That the devil has entered into men we know from Holy Writ, and why not now? The evil one is as cunning, and his arm is as long, as ever it was. But again—the man Leo may have been only crazy drunk, for in those later days he drank much of the red wine of the country, which is bad, very bad for foreigners. With Spanish blood only does it mix well."

"Of what nation was Leo?"

"That I know not. But more than once have I heard Padre Damen, a German priest of San Fernando, who alone of all the men in California, perhaps, Leo loved, call him with much laughter 'a Viking," whatever that may mean.'

"You call the son Vanuela?" questioned the lieutenant.

"It's his mother's name, señor—his mother's Spanish name. What was Leo's other name we never knew. From the day he came ashore at San Pedro, thirty years ago, his face wide open with a fresh knife slash, to the day he lay dead at our feet at San Fernando, he was a mystery and a marvel to us all."

"Well," said Carroll as he rose to go, "the man Hugo is still young. Let us be charitable, and hope that he will improve with years—that he will be at least an improvement on his father."

Don Augustin lifted his shoulders in a shrug of unbelief.

"I fear not, señor. His father was a bad, bad man, and his mother an Indian of the Coahuilas—though mission bred. The blood in his veins is all bad, and against that the prayers of the Virgin and the saints can avail but little—though the good Lord pardon me for saying it."

CHAPTER V

ENGLAND'S AGENT

THE dingy little room was dusty, unswept, and festooned with grimy cobwebs hanging in the dark corners. On the cracked and time-soiled walls the distorted shadows of the two men at the table, stirred to life by the idle flickering of the candle flame, swayed grotesquely.

Hugo Vanuela threw down his cards with a muttered oath.

"The devil himself is in the cards to-night—I can win nothing." He reached over to the bottle, and filled the glass with red wine.

The other, a big bearded man in the leather leggings of a vaquero, gathered up the cards and laid them aside in a neat pile. Pocketing the coin on the table, he remarked philosophically, as he lifted the candle to light his cigarette:

"Truly, Señor Vanuela, it comes in that manner, sometimes, to all of us. But before we began at the cards you were saying that Governor Pico and Commandant Castro were quarreling before the Americans came."

"Yes, for nearly a year—always. Then Castro went north. Then there came into the San Joaquin Valley this American Fremont, with his fur traders and trappers. Later they made a

revolution and seized Sonoma. Then Commodore Stockton and his ships came to Monterey. Commandant Castro tried to raise men for an army to fight the American, while Don Pio Pico was here asking for men to fight Castro.

"Both Pico and Castro wrote haughty letters to one another, and made proclamations. It is all very funny now, as one looks back—the Americans came so soon. Then both Pico and Castro returned to the pueblo with their little armies, and embraced. But," he added with a shrug of his shoulders, "the people did not want to fight."

"Was the legislature in session when they returned to the south?" asked the bearded man, as he shot a sly, sidewise glance at the Californian.

"Yes, señor, they were busy with the plan of Padre MacNamara. Pico, after he came back, favored the plan. After talking for a whole week, they adopted it."

"MacNamara—I do not think I have heard of him." Again his full brown eyes, from between his half-closed eyelids, were stealthily searching Vanuela's face.

"Santa Maria, but that was a plan!" Hugo continued, with a flash of enthusiasm. "That Padre MacNamara, por Dios, but he was a man!—taller even than you, and broad—like a church door. To the legislature he talked for hours, for days, and held them listening like children. He

asked them for much land in the north, whereon to settle many thousand of his countrymen, the people of Ireland; for the Irish, as you may not know, señor, are Catholics, and not heretics like the English and Americans."

The ghost of a smile showed under the black beard, and the listener nodded silently.

"There were many rich men of England with the padre in his plan, men with great connections, and had it been but a few months earlier it would have saved us from the coming of these cursed Americans. If it had been in time, England would never have permitted California to be taken away from them, and the American commodore would not have dared to place his flag on the customhouse at Monterey. For English ships with many cannon were there in the bay at the time."

"Truly, a magnificent plan! As you say, it would have made a great nation of California,—a great Christian nation."

Through the closed door came the raucous roar of a drinking song, and the maudlin laughter of intoxication.

"And the people?" queried the bearded one. "Are they satisfied with the present régime?"

"Ten thousand devils, no! They hate the Americans. Not a cockfight since they entered the pueblo. One cannot go on the street after

sunset without a piece of paper from the American officer at the stockade. To have a 'ball', where one may dance with his friends, one must almost go on his knees to the American. But what will you? They suffer and hate, but submit." Hugo shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "The *gente de razon* have all signed the parole not to fight against the Americans—the rest are as sheep."

"Have you signed the parole?"

The brown face of Vanuela reddened, and he answered shortly, "No."

"And the wonderful MacNamara," inquired the other lazily, "what became of him?"

"That I cannot say. Some believe that he is in Mexico City."

"He is not."

Hugo stared and stared at him wonderingly. The bearded one was on his feet now, his gaze holding the Californian. The man seemed transformed; gone was the lackadaisical air of careless indolence. The quivering light of the candles revealed his immense height, his broad shoulders, the strong lines of his features, the piercing keenness of his glance, and the bold assurance in his full brown eye. His very personality radiated power, but his smile, as he gazed at Vanuela, was seductive and winning.

"He is here," he said quietly.

Vanuela sprang to his feet, and stepped back.

Then, as his glance swept the other's countenance —the full, broad brow, the masterful gaze—the light of recognition came into the Californian's face.

"So—you are—"

"Padre MacNamara, at your service. Three months in the hills have given me this." He touched his beard with his hand.

"You do not seem overcome with joy at seeing me, my friend." He showed his white teeth in a smile, a smile that in many lands had won its way to the hearts of men and women alike.

Vanuela regarded him for a moment, distrust showing in every line of his countenance.

"So-o-o," he said slowly. "But why do you tell me this? What is to prevent me from informing the Americans?"

MacNamara laughed. "Because, my friend, I know men, and you are not the man to betray to the enemies of your country one who has drunk with you. Especially when it is your much admired MacNamara, the continuation of whose life and the success of whose plans mean so much to your country."

Again the radiant, winning smile illumined his face, and in spite of himself, Vanuela smiled back.

"You judged rightly," he said, as he grasped MacNamara's hand. "But your great plan avails nothing now; it is too late."

MacNamara pounded on the table with the

bottle, and the innkeeper appeared with a new supply of wine.

"Not so, my friend," he resumed. "It is not too late."

"But all the *gente de razon* are with the Americans. They have given their parole not to fight against the United States. They will not do anything."

"Are you ready to do anything?"

"Not without the support of the men who have given their parole. It would be useless."

"Then," MacNamara said, after a moment's thought, "they must be made to break their parole. Is this list complete?" He drew a paper from his pocket. "Listen, Arguello, Avila, Arriaga, Bandini, Arillo—"

"A little information I would ask," broke in Vanuela. "What is the punishment for breaking a parole?"

"Shooting—file of soldiers—a stone wall, perhaps hanging. Arillo, Reyes, Cota, Pico," he went on.

At the word "Arillo," and the picture evoked by MacNamara's disjointed words, the Californian looked up quickly, the baleful gladness of an evil inspiration in his gleaming eyes. He moistened his dry lips with his tongue, and the hand holding the cigar trembled, sending the ash cone on the end in a soft shower to the floor.

"So-o-o," said Vanuela.

He arose, took a turn across the room, and then reached out his hand to MacNamara.

"In this I am yours to command, completely, señor."

"Good; I knew I had not mistaken my man. Yes, a parole broken means death, according to the laws of war. But there is no fear of that, and for this reason. Listen, my friend." He bent over the table till his face was close to the other's, and spoke in a low tone. "There are six ships of the British fleet now on the coast. Five more, I believe, are on their way around Cape Horn. As soon as the revolt is successful our ships will land men at Monterey and Santa Barbara, and hold both towns. With all stock and horses driven away from the beach, and it blockaded, the American troops will be hemmed in by land and sea. Their position will be hopeless. It is not too late; now is the appointed time."

There was that in the deep chest tones of the man, in the steadiness and sureness of his gaze, and the earnestness of his demeanor that carried conviction.

The Californian raised his eyebrows. "Ah, you are no priest."

"Priest, no," MacNamara laughed easily. "No, an English officer, born and raised in Gibraltar—hence my command of your beautiful

language. But to get back — the men on the list must be forced to move. If the Americans can be plagued into some act of rashness now, while the town is a seething mass of discontent, the rest will be easy. If once shots are fired and blood is spilled—hold, I have it. There will be much drinking next Friday, a week from to-day; it is Mexican Independence Day. Cannot we use the rabble for the purpose of scaring the sentry at the gate of the stockade? Have them beat drums and shoot. If we can organize a drunken frolic, with plenty of noise, perhaps the Americans will fire. If they do, it is well; if not, there is nothing lost. Everything can be explained. What think you?"

Vanuela smiled and nodded. In his heart he much doubted the success of any revolt against the Americans — but the picture of Don José Antonio Arillo facing the firing squad, his back against a stone wall, had him in its grip, and was tantalizing him with its possibility. He would work with MacNamara as far as the Englishman's plans coincided with his own, and at present they both desired to drive into open revolt the men who had signed the paroles. But he had no desire to see the revolt a success. The Americans would win in the end, and then, for Arillo, the rope or the bullet. However, let the future take care of itself.

"There is a crowd of wild young fools in the city who, I am told," he said, "play at revolution, and call one of their number 'governor' and another 'commandant.' With plenty of wine, yes, it can be done."

MacNamara drew from his pocket a handful of gold. "Take this to wet the throats of your gay young friends, and deepen their ardor."

Vanuela, ever avaricious, gathered it up; it was a hundredfold what he had lost at cards.

Laying his hand on Hugo's shoulder, the other said seriously:

"You are to do a great work for California to-day, *mi amigo*, and when the British flag floats over this city you will not be forgotten. Long after you and I have crumbled into dust the story of to-night's doings shall be a tale that shall be told to little children in the days to come."

Vanuela, as he noted the flash of the other's eyes and the ring of enthusiasm in his voice, looked his uncomprehending wonder, but he shrewdly resisted the desire to shrug his shoulders, and answered gravely:

"I believe it, señor."

With his hand on the door, he turned to the Englishman. "But still, I do not understand. Suppose that you had been mistaken, and that after I had heard your plan I had not agreed?"

"It would not have happened; but if, unfortunately, it did, well—I would have killed you, my friend. We were alone—there were no witnesses—a row at cards—with wine—'t is common enough."

For fully an hour Vanuela sat on the shaded front of the wine shop, smoking endless cigarettes and whistling snatches of a bugle call, his brooding face ever turned toward the white wall of the stockade. Then, pulling his sombrero closer over his face, he walked boldly across the street and into the inclosure.

As he stepped noiselessly into Gillie's office the captain stopped massaging his lip for a moment, and looked up in surprise.

"Have I the honor of addressing Señor Captain Gillie?"

"Yes; what is it?"

Vanuela glanced meaningly at the door leading to the next room.

"What I have to tell the captain is for his ears alone." He motioned toward the door.

"Carruthers," the American called, "take your position ten paces farther down the veranda, and admit no one until further orders." He turned toward the newcomer. "What is your name?"

"Hugo Vanuela, señor, from the Rancho San Marino. I am one of those, I would have the captain know, to whom the coming of the

Americans was welcome—very welcome. They will always have my support and sympathy in all things." He paused to note the effect of his words, but the officer's face was inscrutable.

"Good; I am glad to hear it. Proceed."

"I would warn the captain to be careful. There is much discontent in the pueblo. The people are restless and dissatisfied. They do not like the regulations that the Señor Captain has established."

"Yes, I have suspected as much. Oh, they will get used to them in time. Do you know of anything definite?"

Vanuela hesitated. "Ah, the señor, like all Americans, goes straight to the point—a wonderful people. Yes—so quick they do everything. Nothing have I heard but rumors, it being difficult for me to find the truth, because my friendship for the captain's countrymen is well known. But this much is certain, señor, that there are meetings being held, secretly, and often."

Gillie's hand left his lip; he was all attention now.

"Where, and who attend them?" he asked, as he took up his pen and drew a sheet of paper toward him.

"That I cannot say positively, señor, but I fear that it is at the home of Don José Antonio Arillo. Of that I cannot be really sure, and can offer no proof, except that it is plain, in case of

fighting, he is the one man they depend upon to lead them."

"Arillo, — oh, yes, formerly alcalde, a tall, dark man,—lives over there on the corner of the plaza. He was one of the first to sign the parole."

Vanuela held up a warning hand.

"A little patience, señor; I would do nothing hastily. It may be,—you see I wish to be just, —it may be that I do Señor Arillo injustice. All I can tell you is the talk of the street. I would do nothing at present. It would be a mistake to proceed against him. Have I the permission of the señor to pretend friendliness toward this movement, so that in this way I may come by information that may be of value to you?" He blew a long white streak of smoke. "It will be easy for me to obtain information,—then they will trust me."

"You wish to act as a spy for us?"

"Ah, it is not a nice word, señor, that 'spy,'— say rather a watchful friend. But I wish the captain to understand, so that if I appear to be implicated I shall be protected from evil results. Have I permission to so act? Is it understood between us?"

"It is a good idea, Señor Vanuela, and I wish we had more friends like you. We need them, and you may be sure that your loyalty is duly appreciated."

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Vanuela smiled in his slow, easy way.

"So-o-o. The Señor Captain is kind, but perhaps he overrates my abilities. It is possible I may be mistaken, but I fear not. I shall come to the señor very often. Perhaps I shall find or hear nothing, and if so it will be well indeed: but if I do, the captain shall know of it, most assuredly."

Hardly had Vanuela stepped out into the darkness when Jim Marshall strolled in leisurely. The frontiersman's wrinkled eyes, looking at Gillie from under his broad-brimmed hat, were keen and eager.

"Say, captain,—

"Have you forgotten how to salute an officer, Marshall?"

"Oh, say, excuse me, captain, I niver kin recollect them military ways; but no offense—anything to oblige. Now them thar old guns of Castro's livin' out thar in the stockade—they're in pretty fair shape, 'cept for the spikin', and I kin take that out with acid. Kin ye get any acid, captain?"

"I will think about it, Marshall, and will let you know my decision later. Meanwhile, there are more important things to attend to. Get your carpenter tools and repair the guardhouse doors. Some of the veranda posts are loose. You will repair them at once, you understand."

"All right, captain."

Marshall's long jaw crunched on the tobacco that lumped visibly in his hollow, unshaven cheek.

"Now about that acid, captain—"

"That will do, Marshall; you may go. Have the work finished by to-morrow night."

The frontiersman gone, the captain's thoughts reverted to Vanuela. He was far from being favorably impressed by the Californian. It was altogether probable that the fellow was trying, in his clumsy Mexican way, to curry favor with him in order to more easily obtain future favors in the form of permits. Still, one could not tell; they were a strange people, and if there was nothing to be gained, if Vanuela's suspicions were unfounded, there was at least nothing to be lost. And if it should happen that there was trouble brewing, then it would be well to have a spy among the enemy. As for Arillo, there was nothing to be done at present. The mere rumors of the wine rooms and the streets were not sufficient. For Gillie, with all his peculiarities, was a just man, according to his lights. One thing, however, he must do — he must keep the fact that Vanuela was now practically a spy in the service of the Americans a secret even from his own officers. To have it leak out might possibly destroy the man's usefulness.

He did not know that the keen eyes of John

Carroll had noted the Californian leaving the office. To make sure that he had made no mistake, he hurried out the gate and crossed the street, thus coming face to face with Vanuela. The lieutenant looked at him searchingly. Neither spoke, but both must have felt an instinctive hostility, for in their souls at that moment was born a dislike so bitter that death alone could eradicate it.

CHAPTER VI

MARSHALL'S WARNING

TWENTY-FIVE men, booted and spurred and equipped for weeks on the hills and plains, sat on their horses within the stockade, awaiting the word of command to march. They were Benito Willard's company of militia, organized some weeks before at the suggestion of Stockton.

Years before the commodore had hoisted his flag in the plaza, there had been foreigners resident in the pueblo. Some had deserted from sailing ships, others had been sent out by the Boston trading companies, whose vessels visited the coast every year, bartering for hides and tallow. Charmed by the indolent, care-free life of the people, and won by the ever spring-like climate, they had remained, and in due time had taken to themselves Californian wives and learned to speak the language of the land with a guttural utterance. A few of the members of the company were English, and a few French, but all were equally anxious for the vitalizing effect of American rule.

Among the Americans none stood higher with the Californians than Ben Willard, or "Don Benito," as they called him. His sterling honesty,

his strength of character, and his kindliness had so won their hearts that, though he was not a Mexican citizen, they had insisted on his serving as alcalde of the eastern district where his rancho, the Hurupa, was located. He owned one of the few stores in the pueblo, and had taken to wife a daughter of one of the foremost Californian families. It was with great reluctance that Willard had accepted Stockton's commission as captain of the militia company. His warm feeling for the people among whom he had found a home made him averse to serving in a military capacity, even though there seemed little probability of further hostilities.

In spite of lack of inches there was about Ben Willard, as with Will Harbin his lieutenant he stood on the veranda listening to Captain Gillie's final instructions, an air of reserved force that unconsciously inspired confidence and respect. His deep hazel eyes were quietly quizzical, but there was keenness and decision in his thin lips and closely set mouth.

"I have reliable information that Commandant Castro is in Cucumonga Cañon, and that he is secretly recruiting a large body of men. Bring him in, dead or alive," Gillie was saying.

Hugo Vanuela, seated idly on a neighboring veranda,— one would fancy half asleep,— with a satisfied smile watched the cavalcade as it

rode away. It was he who had carried to the American commander the imaginary rumor of the commandant's whereabouts. The idea had originated with MacNamara, who, knowing Gillie's anxiety to add to his laurels by capturing Castro, had concocted the story.

The plot worked exactly as the two had hoped. It robbed the city of its best defense, for the men who had ridden away were the only ones who could have suppressed a revolution in the city. These men knew the Californian spirit; they were influential in council, and while they remained there was little chance of an uprising.

As the handful swung out into the open road at a quick canter, not one among them dreamed that there would be trouble during their absence. They did not know that a British secret agent was planning for the capture of the garden of America, and that there were days when the future ownership of California hung trembling in the balance among a trio of American, British, and Mexican rival nations. Except for Lieutenant John Carroll, there was not a man left in the city of Los Angeles capable of handling a situation such as MacNamara could inspire and Vanuela execute.

The breach between Carroll and Gillie had widened recently. Carroll had not been taken into Gillie's confidence in regard to Vanuela's

frequent visits, and the lieutenant was piqued because this evidence of trust was withheld from a subordinate whose experience and knowledge of the people were valuable.

Indeed, Gillie had for a time contemplated sending Carroll with Willard's company, and the heart of the soldier almost stood still with the first fear he had ever known.

Some trivial incident had diverted Gillie from his purpose, and the lieutenant heaved a sigh of relief as a cloud of dust, mounting to the evening sky, announced that the company had passed beyond all danger of being overtaken, even should the captain change his mind.

For Jack Carroll had made up his mind that to-night was the night of all nights in his life. To-night he was to call at the house of Arillo and ask the Don for the hand of his daughter. A more cautious man would have sought out some friend, say Don Augustin Alvaro, told of his purpose, and asked his coöperation; roundabout negotiations would have followed, with probably the same result. But Carroll was an American. He felt that the way had been sufficiently paved by the former meeting; Loreto's clinging arm and her worshiping eyes had told him her answer to his yet unspoken question.

He was willing, even anxious, to give the parents all due deference, but suspense was maddening,

and he determined that the "mañana" of the land should not thwart his happiness for a single hour.

Across the stockade, a marine unlocked a door and released Marshall, who had been serving time in the guardhouse as punishment for overstaying his leave of absence.

"Goin' courtin', lootenant?" queried Marshall in a low tone, as Carroll passed him.

"Possibly," replied Carroll with a guilty look. Somehow he felt that behind all Marshall's unmilitary familiarity there lay a deep concern for his welfare, and every jocular remark had in it a ring of solicitude that went straight to his heart.

"That's right, my boy," he mused. "Good women is the finest things in the world. There ware n't any women whar I spent most of my life. Perhaps I'd a done better if I'd a stayed where they wuz. This life has n't got me anythin' but wealth, and now that I have that I could n't enjoy myself among civilized folks. I'd just be miserable back in the States, walkin' on sidewalks and goin' to church and wearin' store clothes. Jehosophat!"

He shuddered at the idea.

"Wealthy?" queried Carroll in surprise.

Marshall stammered awkwardly. "Wa-all, I've been a pretty good trader, John," he replied

evasively, "and I could gather up a bit, I suppose. Perhaps when I got back to the States, what I've put away would n't look much. I want to tell you somethin', son."

"Well?" said Carroll, somewhat amazed.

"Don't postpone any weddin' for lack of chink. Go 'long, now."

Carroll turned away, marveling at the remark. He knew questions were useless. Marshall's final word was always, "Go 'long." When the frontiersman uttered those words, it was a sign that the conversation had ended.

Marshall walked over and inspected the stockade gate.

"Ain't much to them gates. A ten-year-old boy with a good copper-toed boot could kick a hole through this one. And that bar is shaky, too."

Brooks, a typical marine, nodded and grinned. Concerned only in obeying orders as they came to him, day by day, Marshall's inquisitive initiative and restless speculation were to him a never-ending source of amusement.

"Ain't worrying me none. It's the captain's business," he remarked.

Marshall strode over to the veranda where Gillie stood, and saluted awkwardly.

"Say, captain, about that acid —"

"I have decided not to bother with the guns,

Marshall; they are not worth it. And by the way, continue your repair work on that veranda over there. It is in even worse condition than was this."

Marshall's brow wrinkled, and he hesitated a moment.

"Captain, could I see you alone for a moment?"

Together they walked into the office, and there the frontiersman came to the point in his usual direct way.

"Captain Gillie, there is surely somethin' brewin' up in the town. You think you have all of Castro's guns out there, but only last night I chanced to overhear two fellahs in a wine shop talkin' of a cannon—a brass cannon—buried somewhere in a garden or cornfield. They saw me listenin', and quit talkin'; but before they did, I had got that much of it, anyway."

The captain smiled sarcastically.

"My good man," he said patronizingly, "your good intentions do you infinite credit, but I fear you have 'cannon' on the brain. I know positively we have all the guns Castro ever had, and besides, you ought to know enough about these people to know they have no real intention of resistance. They like to fuss and talk and threaten, after filling themselves with wine, and that is all they will ever do."

"Ya-a-s, I know," Marshall admitted reluctantly. "They're great on plottin' and yellin', and not much on fightin', but I don't trust them none. Now about that acid for them guns. It would n't take more than —"

"Marshall," the officer snapped with an air of irritation, "I don't want you to mention either acid or guns to me again. You may go now."

"About them gates, captain; they ain't none too strong. Them bars, too, is mighty shaky."

"Never mind the gates. Fix the other veranda as ordered. Your business is to obey orders, not to make suggestions. You may go," he repeated.

Marshall grinned philosophically, and as the captain a half-hour later passed out the gate he noted him at work, whistling cheerfully at his appointed task. But directly he had passed, Marshall seated himself lazily on the steps, and, producing from his pocket a long roll of brown tobacco, drew from his sheath a huge hunting knife, and proceeded to cut off a piece.

"Wa-a-al, thar's what I call a mighty cocksure little bit of a man. Sooner or later that fellah will get a jolt that will rattle his spine," he said to Brooks, who was pacing up and down behind him.

"Now he don't care for suggestions, and

I'd think that any darned fool would take a suggestion if it was a good one, even if it came from Old Nick himself."

Brooks chuckled. "You had better not let the captain hear you calling him a darned fool. You might find yourself in the guardhouse again."

"I ain't done it—not me. But say, you military man, could they put any one in the guardhouse for just thinkin' the captain is a fool?"

"No, I think not—of course not."

Marshall took off his hat and scratched his head thoughtfully. "Wa-a-al," he said with an air of compromise, "we'll just let it go at that."

He looked cautiously around—at the pacing marine, at the veranda across the stockade, at the gate where Gillie had disappeared. Then with a broad grin of reckless determination he gathered up his tools, walked over to the gate, and began work on it.

"Orders is orders, all right, all right," he soliloquized, "but greasers is greasers, and gates is gates—except this one, which ain't no gate at all."

He took off his coat and threw it on the ledge at the foot of the wall, then, after a moment's fumbling, removed from the pocket some papers, and lastly a leathern pouch. Its weight made him smile.

"Jehosophat! What a haul that 'ud be for a greaser!" He smiled as he slipped it into his trousers pocket. "I'll have to bank this with the rest, to-night."

He looked at a beetle crawling on the sand at his feet.

"The people of this community, and you, Mister Bug, got jest about the same amount of hoss sense," he mused. "The captain don't know that the women have a cannon buried sumwhar; the lootenant don't know that the Arillo gal is his fer the askin'; the greasers don't know that Vanuela is tryin' to whipsaw them; an' none of them know that the wealth the big world is strivin' and dyin' for, lies here in this country in the dirt under their very feet."

CHAPTER VII

A SOLDIER'S WOOING

CAREFULLY do the men of Spanish stock guard their women, as even now in southern lands. The large measure of individual freedom and personal responsibility which the Anglo-Saxon accords to his sisters and daughters is utterly unknown in the lands where the sonorous Castilian is spoken. From her earliest childhood to the day she goes to the arms of her husband the Spanish girl is reared in the thought that she is not considered fully capable of guarding herself, but that her virtue, her reputation, as well as her ultimate fate, are in the ever-watchful care of relatives.

To sit alone with a man, to walk with him even in public places, would be intolerable and unwomanly boldness. It would be inexcusable ignorance of the proprieties on the part of the relatives who permitted it. Perhaps something of the spirit of the Moor, with his carefully guarded harem, or perhaps the passionate ardor of a hot-blooded southern race, is responsible for the institutions of the iron-barred door and window, and the ever-watchful duenna, a personage of whom the modern chaperon is but a weak and faint reflection.



But love laughs at barred windows and duennas, as it is said to laugh at locksmiths. On the street, at church, even while under the care of aunt or mother, the meeting eyes of man and maid tell the story that may not be told by the tongue—a long, devouring gaze, that only the Spanish woman knows how to send, carries the message her lips may not utter. And so it is but little of a surprise to her when, glancing from her window, she sees, standing hour after hour perhaps, the man to whom she has already paid the tribute of her eyes. To this day in Spanish-speaking countries the spectacle of a man standing silent, staring up at a window, is too common to attract more than passing attention. Nor is it treated by the passers-by with the heartless raillery of the Anglo-Saxon, but with the courteous consideration that is characteristic of the race. If it be night, he sings to attract her attention, and she steals to the iron bars, and there, with the metal grill between their throbbing hearts, they tell to one another the glad sweet things that have flowed from the lips of lovers since ever love began.

Not hastily, for that would betoken the lack of a proper sense of their own worth and dignity, do the parents deign to take official notice of the courtship. When at last the anxious lover is invited by father and mother to enter the house

it is safe to say that they are well advised as to his family, his character, and his prospects. But of that knowledge the parents give no sign until the lover makes a formal demand for the daughter's hand. He is met either with a firm but kindly refusal, or with an equally courteous consent. But the approval of the parents does not mean any relaxation of the careful guardianship by mother or aunt. There are few tête-à-têtes or opportunities for fond caresses, but, as before, the dark eyes speak with a passionate tenderness that the cold blue eyes of the north can never know.

Of much of this John Carroll was aware. Aware too was he of the prideful regard in which the man of pure Castilian blood holds the honor of his family name. For this sentiment the lieutenant had much respect. Himself the son of a retired naval officer, and a grandnephew of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, his was one of the oldest families in Maryland, a family that proudly traced its lineage to an associate of Lord Baltimore. On this score he had no apprehension; that he had been invited to the house gave him courage and hope.

As he entered the Arillo home, Don José Antonio's grave face lighted with kindly smiles at the sight of the young soldier.

"My house is yours, my house is yours," he

repeated with a sincerity that almost made the timeworn expression of hospitality for once believable.

The dispatch of the soldiers urged Carroll to immediate action, and his preliminary words were indeed very incidental. He had come to win a bride. Why delay?

"Yours is a beautiful country, señor," he declared, trying to imitate the prefacing remarks with which the Mexican always heralds some important topic. "I have seen the blue bays of Italy, and the orange groves of Andalusia, but they cannot compare with your California. I have decided to remain, and when the war on the Rio Grande is over I shall purchase a rancho and make my home here."

"Glad indeed am I to hear it," replied the Don, in a tone so deliberate that he betrayed his anticipation of the declaration that was to follow. His hand halted midway in stroking his beard, and he looked seriously into Carroll's eyes, as though he would search and see if his soul and heart and mind were true.

"Don José Antonio," said Carroll, rising to his feet to give added impressiveness to his words, "I am a soldier and a gentleman, the son of a soldier and a gentleman. I come not to boast of myself, but to tell you first that my hands are clean and my conscience clear, and that

the name of Carroll has never known stain on its honor. My father and my grandfather before me bore arms for their country."

Don José Antonio nodded gravely.

Carroll knew well Arillo's standards, and his requirements for a son-in-law. He had made his case in his own behalf, and he made it as briefly and modestly as he could.

"And now I have the honor to ask you to permit me to pay my addresses to your daughter, that I may ask her hand in marriage."

Cool and unflinching, he looked into Arillo's eyes.

"You are quick and direct, señor," he almost complained. Then he added, with an indulgent shrug, "It is the American way.

"It is a priceless jewel you ask for," he resumed in his poetic fashion. "And yet,— it must come to us,— the time when we give our dearest possession to a stranger. I will call the señora."

To the mother Carroll's style changed in a twinkling, and in almost caressing tones he told of his love for her daughter. As he talked, the woman's eyes filled with tears and her feeble protest was virtually a consent. She was a woman who loved a chivalrous lover.

"You will take her away to your own country?" she said gloomily.

"Ah, no, señora; your land and your daughter

won my heart in the same hour. I had just told Don José Antonio that I propose to make California my home when the war is ended."

The señora was thinking fast. She blushed.

"The children—they will be Catholics?"

"Assuredly; I was born in the faith."

Don José Antonio looked at her triumphantly.

"The saints be praised," she said devoutly, "else this love of yours had been a calamity." She was silent for a space, her arms folded, her foot tapping incessantly on the rug. As she gazed out the window into the moonlit garden, her eyes again sought the shadowy clump of rosebushes in the far corner. There was a crafty look in her full-orbed glance as she again met Carroll's gaze.

"But if, when the war in Mexico is over,—if your army is driven back into Texas,—if your flag goes down and California still remains a part of Mexico and you are called away—señor, I fear it would then be impossible."

Carroll smiled at the supposition.

"Nothing can come between us." He spoke firmly, and the mother's eyes brightened with admiration at the declaration of constancy. "Army regulations would permit me to withdraw from the service and, as I said before, this land shall be my home."

The mother's eyes softened, and her tone betrayed her final capitulation.

"Loreto," she called.

Loreto Arillo entered slowly. Not the pouting, dimpled, laughing, care-free girl of the casement; not the bewitching, elfin creature who had clung to him far beyond the necessity of fear, a few nights ago, but a woman, magnificent, queenly, and serious with all the dignity of her race.

To-night she showed Lieutenant Carroll that the daughter of the Arillos did not depend on smiles or glances for her beauty. To-night she gave him proof that she was qualified by every grace to be the wife of an American officer. Hers were more than girlish fascinations. Her beauty was lustrous, almost Egyptian. There was not the suspicion of a smile on her lips as she advanced with the grace of a queen, and extended her hand that he might kiss it.

Marveling, he gazed at the woman who was to be his wife; enraptured by the metamorphosis, he raised her hand to his lips with almost religious reverence. One moment she looked into his eyes, long and wistfully.

"Had you not come," she whispered, "my heart would have broken."

Her words, the touch of her hands, the look in her velvety eyes, again sent the wild gallopers loose in the veins of John Carroll. Hardly

could he restrain himself from gathering her in his arms and raining kisses on her upturned face. But the calm eyes of the señora were upon them; the unwritten law of the land and the people forbade. His charmed brain was telling him one overweening fact. In any land, in any company, among any rank or fashion or condition of society, here was a woman of whom he would ever be proud. No child-wife would she be; no capricious miss to be humored, caressed, or scolded. No, to-night she was the woman glorious, dignifying his suit with a seriousness merited by a love like his.

As they chatted together with the strange, newborn familiarity of love, all her hauteur vanished, and she was once again the witching maiden of his first impression. Her eyes wide with wondering worshipfulness, she listened to his tales of a soldier's life by land and sea. In silent enthrallment he watched her baby-like fingers flashing across the harp strings as she sang to him,— old melodies first sung by some forgotten troubadour in the dim centuries of the past among the far-off hills of Aragon.

As Don José Antonio looked upon them, he sighed softly. Yet as his slow glance dwelt approvingly upon the virile lines of the soldier's well-knit frame, at his handsome face all aglow with new-found happiness, he smiled with satisfied

pride. Such a son would be no discredit to the house of Arillo.

To Carroll it seemed that he had never known before that such a woman existed. Intoxicated with her charm, doubting almost that he was awake, marveling at the suddenness and completeness of her capitulation, he felt a contemptuous sorrow for kings, for heroes, for the ancient gods, for all the world. How could the sphere roll on through space, how could any man live and be content, while another possessed Loreto Arillo? So sped the moments, every second electrified with love.

The lieutenant walked homeward with the mien of a man who had drunk deep of century-old wine. Had the stars been crystals beneath his feet, he would have crunched them without heed. Every particle of blood in his body was coursing madly through his veins, heralding to every fiber, imparting to every molecule of his being, the thrill which came with thoughts of Loreto Arillo. He was within the shadow of the old bull ring before he thought of her half-jocular warning, "Beware the Black Matador."

He laughed aloud in his happiness. He would shake hands with the devil himself to-night. Human or supernatural were all alike to him. He was gay as a drunkard. He started to whistle, "Oh, the heart that has truly loved." Then

he stopped. It seemed that a form was rising out of the ground, in a shadowy corner not twenty feet away. He heard the clicking of coin and scraping of earth, as though something was being buried when his whistle interrupted operations. He stopped and gazed; the figure rose to full stature.

"Who goes there?" he demanded.

"A friend—let me pass," said a voice, evidently disguised.

Carroll blocked the way; the voice was not a strange one. A menacing arm was raised as though to frighten the lieutenant; a cloak was drawn across the face as Loreto had described the specter.

"Halt, or I shoot," commanded Carroll, who though unarmed had the soldier's instinct.

"The devil you will," replied the figure, dropping the cloak, and Jim Marshall stood before him.

"Congratulations, lieutenant," he chuckled.

In puzzled amazement the officer stared at the frontiersman's black raiment, at the short cloak hanging from his arm, at the round knobbed hat of the bull fighter.

"Jim," he protested, "what can you possibly mean by such foolishness? It is dangerous. The provost guard may fire on you."

"Oh, I guess not," drawled Marshall, as he walked away.

"Good night, lieutenant," he called back jocularly. "What people don't understand should n't ever bother them none. A still tongue, too, makes no trouble between friends. Go 'long, now."

For a moment Carroll stood gazing wonderingly in the direction in which Marshall had disappeared. The frontiersman and his ways were beyond understanding.

Then, as he resumed his way to the stockade, he forgot the man and his masquerading. His soul filled with the joy of life and love, he went to his cot to dream of his bride to be.

CHAPTER VIII

"COMO TE AMO, AMAME"

SILENCE and darkness had fallen on the house of Arillo.

Alone in her room sat Loreto, her hands clasped behind her head, a happy smile on her curving red lips. Carroll's deep manly tones, his quaint little touches of accent, his large white hands that could strike such mighty blows, were all her thoughts.

"Ah, what a man he is," she whispered caressingly to herself.

Through the barred window came the tinkling melody of a guitar; then a rich, clear voice sang:

"So still and calm the night is,
The very wind's asleep;
Thy heart's so tender sentinel,
His watch and ward doth keep,
And on the wings of zephyrs soft
That wander how they will,
To thee, oh, woman fair, to thee,
My prayers go fluttering still.
To thee, oh, lady fair, to thee,
My prayers go fluttering still.

"Oh, take the heart's love to thy heart
Of one that doth adore,
Have pity—add not to the flame
That burns thy troubadour,
And if compassion stir thy breast
For my eternal woe,

Oh, as I love thee, loveliest
Of women, love me so.
Oh, as I love thee, loveliest
Of women, love me so."[1]

Could it be her American?—but no, it was not his voice. As she grasped the bars with both hands, and peered out into the night, a young man stepped close to the window, a look of glad expectancy on his dreamy, mobile face.

A little ripple of laughter greeted him. "Why, Servolo,—Servolo Palera, is it thou? What does—"

"Loreto mine, I have always loved thee, since thou wert a little, little girl."

"But Servolo," she protested, "how foolish, how utterly foolish—thou singing at my window, when every day thou art in our house with José and Manuel, like a brother."

"Could I speak of love with others ever near? And I am not thy brother, thanks be to heaven, Loreto. The love of a man, the love I have for thee, is not foolish," he said with dignity, as he took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Always, always, hast thou been to me the light of my life, the joy of my heart. And it would kill me, Loreto, if thou couldst not love me."

Little she knew how truly he spoke.

[1] "La noche esta serena," by the kind permission of the translator, Mr. Chas. F. Lummis.

"But, Servolo," she said, amazement still strong upon her, "I never thought—I never dreamed— I do love thee. Thou art very dear to me, even as José and Manuel are."

"No, no," he protested, and there was a world of pain in his tone, "I love thee as a man loves the woman he would wed."

"Oh, Servolo, I am so sorry—so sorry for thee. It seems so strange—" The tears trembled on her dark lashes. "But it can never, never be."

"Has some one else been singing at thy window?" he asked, a new note of fierceness in his voice.

"No, Servolo, no. It is not the American way to—" She checked herself, and covered her face with her hands. "I had not intended to tell."

"An American, Jesus Maria! An American!" he repeated incredulously. "And they so rough and wild,—men who drink much wine, shout and fight, and lie like dogs in the open street. Oh, Loreto!"

"All Americans are not like that; Don Benito Willard and Don Abel Stearns are good men, and Señor Carroll is an officer and a gentleman, and also—thanks be to the Holy Mother—a Catholic."

"An officer—a gentleman—and a Catholic,"

he repeated hopelessly. His hands were clasped far apart on one of the cross bars, and as his head drooped between them he wept bitterly.

"Sangre de Cristo!" he exclaimed, throwing up his head. "I will kill him! He shall not have thee!"

"No, no, Servolo! For the love of Heaven, speak not so! Wouldst thou kill me? It would kill me also, dost thou hear? For I love him, I love him so."

"Thou lovest him," he repeated incredulously.

"I love him,—more than my family, more than father or mother or brothers, more than all the world."

"Has—has he spoken yet?"

"He has, and father and mother have given their consent—thank the saints. He will stay in California when the war in Mexico is over. But, promise me, oh, promise me, Servolo," she pleaded as she reached through the bars and caught one of his wrists with her little hands, "promise me that thou wilt not harm him."

"Have no fear, Loreto. Since thou lovest him, I love thee too much to harm him, but—Jesus! Jesus!" He covered his face with his hands, and his shoulders shook convulsively.

"Yet I still love thee, dear, truer, more deeply than before," he continued bravely. "My heart is dead—the sun shines no more for me—yet

I blame thee not. My life I would give for thee gladly, as before."

He had recovered his composure, and his handsome face bore evidence of the truth of his brave, fervid words.

"Still shall I love thee, Loreto. Ever, if I may, let me serve thee. In these troublous times, perhaps I may shield and defend thee. Thus may I forget my grief until kind Death releases me." Then lifting her fingers to his lips, he strode away in the darkness.

And Loreto Arillo, her tender heart aching for the friend of her childhood, wept silently on her pillow, till sleep fell upon her.

CHAPTER IX

"THE SONS OF ANCIENT SPAIN"

THE last words of the love song died away, and the singing ended with a final sweep on the strings of the guitar. Pleased at the applause, ready and generous, the singer smiled happily, and handed the instrument to the young man across the table.

"It is now for thee, Servolo—pardon me, governor. Something of thine own."

Servolo smiled, showing his strong white teeth under the little curled mustache. Cast in a slender mold, light-limbed and graceful, his heavy, bushy black hair in many a wavy fold framed the broad low brow of the dreaming idealist. Yet there was something of strength in the long sweep of the pointed jaw, and one could easily imagine that the soft eyes could snap in anger. Just at present they were heavy with ill-concealed sorrow; Palera had a weight on his heart.

As his fingers wandered aimlessly over the strings, he gazed around at the dozen young men in the low-roofed room, at the undulating candle flames, and the closed and shuttered windows.

"Look without the door, commandant," he said to Ignacio Reyes.



He hummed a slow strain, his fingers ever searching, seeking on the strings for something that eluded them. Then the notes repeated, wavered, and rose again, till the twinkling fingers found themselves, and as Reyes reëntered with the words, "All is well," the music floated into a low, plaintive melody of the minor chord. A moment only it surged on alone, then his clear tenor voice broke forth in song.

"The stranger rules our fathers' land,
Our flag in dust is lain;
Our heads we bow to his command,
We Sons of Ancient Spain.
Our pulses thrill to the wondrous tale
Of their deeds in days of old.
Oh! can it be our cheeks grow pale,
Our hearts grow weak and cold?

"The race whose bold and hardy sons,
First Ocean's wastes essayed,
The Cross of Christ to the heathen brought,
In the dusky forest glade.
Our pulses thrill to the wondrous tale
Of their deeds in the days of old,
Oh, can it be our cheeks grow pale,
Our hearts grow weak and cold?"

As the grieving, plaintive melody died away his quick eyes again sought the faces of his companions, with a gratified smile.

In all ages it has been men with the brow and the eyes of Servolo Palera who have sung the songs that have echoed in the hearts of men —

songs that have sent them from their quiet firesides, from the arms of their wives and the kisses of their children, to face death on distant foreign fields.

His was the soul of the ancient bard, and his handsome face glowed with gladness as he noted their clouded countenances, their heads bowed, and the tears trembling on their lashes. Their unspoken thoughts, the thoughts that with brave fronts they had sought to cover with airy badinage and assumed indifference, he had rudely dragged to the glaring light of day. The silence, broken by an occasional sigh, was more eloquent than any applause.

"Be not downcast, my children. Your beloved governor would not see you sad. Listen."

The plucking fingers galloped into a quick, joyous lilt, rose into a triumphant strain, and again he sang.

"The tide that flowed in Cortés' veins,
The blood of conquering Spain,
The race that won these hills and plains,
Shall conquer once again.
Within our heart the hope is strong,
The hope that cannot die—
That right shall triumph over wrong
Beneath our southern sky.

"When the hills are soft with creeping green,
And the mustard blooms again,
The sun shall see their banners gleam,
The Sons of Ancient Spain.

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Within our hearts the hope is strong,
The hope that never dies,
That right shall triumph over wrong,
Beneath our southern skies."

There was a moment of tense silence; then a delirious roar of applause. Around him they pressed, with outstretched hands, embracing him, and patting him on the back. Ignacio, with a burst of Latin fervidness, bent over and pressed his lips to his waving locks.

"Ah, Servolo, dear friend of mine, thou art a true singer. Thou playest on our hearts as easily as on thy guitar."

A knock on the door caused immediate silence.

"The Americans!" ran the whisper around the room.

There was a hurried rush for the back entrance, but Palera, reaching the door first, set his back against it and, raising his hand, held them back.

"Stop! If it be the Americans, the house is surrounded, and there is no escape. Would you have a bullet in the back as you run away in the darkness? But if it is a friend, well—we will sing for him and give him some wine."

He unbarred the front door, and Hugo Vanuela stepped inside.

"Let me not disturb you, my friends," he said in his deep voice. "Ah, wine and song—both are good. But do you not fear the Americans will discover your retreat?"

"No," answered Ignacio; "it is far down here by the river. The nose of the man Gillie is long and sharp as that of a coyote, but he has not yet smelled out our burrow. But, Señor Vanuela, why is it thou hast not been with us since the night we first met?"

Vanuela was not especially welcome to many of the young men, but their infinite courtesy forced them to a show of hospitality.

"Ah, that is so, but one cannot be where one will. There is much to do at the rancho. Then, I do not love the pueblo—at present," he added with a wry face.

"Still, there are things that amuse," suggested Servolo. "The saints be thanked for that! Pablo, it is truly a shame the way that thou plaguest the sentry at the stockade gate—peppering him with small stones in the darkness, from the near-by roofs. Some night he will bring thee tumbling down with a shot from his carbine."

"Not so," answered Pablo, "for he can never tell the direction from which they come, as there are always more than one of us on different roofs. But thou, Ignacio, thou wilt be caught some day—calling him 'Pig, pig,' even from the doors across the street, in the broad light of day."

Ignacio's wholesome, boyish grin testified to his guilt.

"Ah, governor," he bantered, "thou needst

not assume airs of virtue. Who was it threw the bleeding head of a pig on the end of a swinging riata over the stockade wall, and brought the worthy Gillie himself storming from his bed? A reward has been posted for the capture of the evil doer. Santa Maria! I am half-minded to collect it myself."

Hugo smiled as the hearty laughter ran around the room. Within the past week he had been busy buying a welcome with MacNamara's gold.

"Let more wine be brought. It is for me to pay," he added, as he laid several gold pieces on the table. "Let it be a cask."

"Now, Señor Vanuela," said Reyes, after the glasses had been emptied, "you shall hear our poet's latest effort. Sing for us again, Servolo, thy new song, 'The Sons of Ancient Spain.' "

As Palera sang, his fine face flushed with wine, the young men threw off all restraint, and swung into the chorus at the tops of their voices.

"Within our hearts the hope is strong,
The hope that never dies,
That right shall triumph over wrong,
Beneath our southern skies."

" 'Tis a grand song, Señor Palera," Vanuela said gravely. "Allow me to congratulate you. 'Twould go well," he added, "to the sound of marching feet."

Again were the glasses filled and emptied, and

again with waving hands and stamping feet they roared through the chorus, till the tinkling of the guitar was lost in the tumult.

Vanuela rose to his feet. "Friends," he said, raising his glass aloft, "to-day is the day of all days—the night of all nights. Have you forgotten that it is the sixteenth of September, the day of Mexico's independence? Shall it pass without our showing the Americans, though conquered we may be, we have not forgotten and never will forget?"

Loud handclapping, and shouts of "No, no!" greeted him.

"Let us then go in the darkness and sing in the ears of our friend Gillie the wonderful song of our poet, that he may know we have not forgotten and that hope does indeed live within our hearts. 'Twill be rare sport to bring him and his men tumbling from their beds, but to gaze upon an empty street."

"But hold," said Palera; "they may fire upon us. The man Gillie has been much annoyed of late."

"Bah! In the darkness we are safe. The Americans shoot well, but in the night, and when greatly excited, the devil himself could not shoot straight. However, if thou art afraid—"

Servolo's eyes snapped indignantly. "I will go," he said quietly.

"And noise, noise," broke in a voice. "We must have plenty of it; there is an old drum in the back room, I believe."

"There is. It needs only tightening," said Ignacio, as he hastened to get it.

"Wait," said Pablo. "I will get father's old *escopeta*. It is but a few steps across the vineyard. There is a charge of powder in it already."

Silently, and with infinite caution, the little line of dark figures trailed across the vineyards and wound through cornfields, stopping here and there at a warning signal from Vanuela. Reaching the main road leading from the river to the houses thickly grouped about the plaza, they lay flat on their faces in an olive grove while an American patrol trotted past.

"Tie up that drum a little tighter, Ignacio. It clanks and is noisy," whispered Servolo.

There was no moon, and the sky, overcast with a blanket of clouds, showed not a single solitary star. Through the inky reek of the night they crept past houses where dogs barked inquiringly. As they stole across the street toward the stockade gate Vanuela lagged behind and, slipping to the rear of one of the buildings, was lost in the darkness. In the intense excitement of the moment his absence was unnoticed. Suddenly the hush of night was broken by loud yells, the rattle of a drum, and a single shot.

CHAPTER X

THE CLANK OF CHAINS

AS Captain Gillie paced up and down the veranda in the darkness, he swung his hands together in a gesture of exasperation. From the guardhouse, across the stockade, half seen in the light of the flaring torch, came the bellowing roar of drunken men, cursing and singing. It was close to midnight, and only an hour ago more than a dozen of them had been herded into the stockade, by a guard of marines—fighting and struggling even to the guardhouse door. The frontiersmen were greater disturbers of the captain's peace of mind than even the Californians.

Then, too, Vanuela had called on the captain during the afternoon, and warned him of a possible assault on the stockade about midnight. He had given him a list of the men who, he said, had secretly instigated the coming attack. Gillie only half believed him. An inspection of the list showed him that almost all the names were those of men whose paroles were locked in his desk. But the captain had been sorely tried in the last few days, and in his shaken condition the thought of Vanuela's warnings began to grow upon him.

"Pshaw, the fellow is lying," he assured

himself. "Those men are not going to break their paroles."

The imprisoned men in the guardhouse had quieted down, and to his ears came only muttered grumblings and the sound of long-drawn snores. At the gate the crunch, crunch, of the sentry's footsteps was broken only by the short stop where he turned to retrace his beat.

Suddenly, by the east gate, the blackness of the night was filled with a tumultuous clamor, — the rush of many feet and the quick, regular throbbing of a drum. Above it all rose the sound of singing, fierce and triumphant.

"The sun shall see their banners gleam,
The Sons of Ancient Spain."

Stones rattled on the gate and hurtled in the darkness over the low wall; the drum tattoed a wild fanfare, and the crimson streak of a gunshot cleft the darkness. In quick response the carbine of the sentry at the gate barked out toward the sound of the tumult.

"To arms! To arms!"

The wild cry echoed through the stockade, and in a moment it was filled with men, half dressed and hatless, their guns in their hands, their eyes wide and wondering. Some one threw open the guardhouse door, and the prisoners, strangely sober now, took their places at the walls. In a moment, above gate and wall alike,

musket barrels protruded. In silence they waited, glaring into the darkness for the glimmer of a moving figure. Far away, from down by the river, a rooster crowed, as though in mockery. A marine next to Carroll on the west wall giggled, a giggle that quickly convulsed the armed men in the darkness.

The captain's face, in the wavering light of the torches, grew ashen, not with fear but with rage and mortification. His own men were laughing at him! Strung to a nervous tension as he had been for the last two weeks, the exciting events of the night made him utterly desperate. In the wild tumult of his tired brain he lost all sense of the relative proportion of things. His teeth came together with a snap; he tried to speak, but from his dry lips there came no sound.

He thought of Vanuela and his repeated warnings; of the list of names in his pocket. He was indeed being made a fool of by the men who had signed the paroles. He called Carroll from the wall.

"Lieutenant Carroll," he said, as he came down the steps, "you will take a detail of ten men, and arrest and bring here the men whose names are on this list."

Carroll held the paper to the light of the flaring oil torch.

"Arillo," he gasped, as the written words sprang

up before him. "Pardon me, captain; this is folly. That man is devoted to our interests. I saw him in his own house not an hour ago."

"Lieutenant Carroll, you will arrest those men at once. Not only that, but you will accept no paroles not to attempt to escape. Forestall any attempt at rescue,— shackle each and every one of them securely, before bringing them here."

A moment later a marine threw the chains clanking at Carroll's feet. On the lieutenant's brow the beads of cold sweat glittered in the torchlight. With an impulsive gesture he drew his sword, the wild idea of breaking it across his knee, of tearing off his shoulder straps, and casting them all at Gillie's feet, sweeping through his mind. With the hilt in one hand, the other grasping the naked blade, he stood for a fleeting instant, gazing into the captain's bloodshot eyes. Then with stony face he saluted, slid the sword into its scabbard, and turned away.

Through the dense darkness of the streets, with the white adobes looming ghostlike around them for a moment, then fading away in the universal blackness, they marched. Lieutenant Carroll pounded loudly with his sword-hilt on Arillo's door, and Don José Antonio himself appeared, half clad, his eyes blinking wonderingly at the clamor.

"Señor Carroll!"

"I have orders to arrest you, Señor Arillo."

"But why? It is incredible, my good friend."

"I do not know, señor."

There was a dull pain in his head, and to his own ears his own voice seemed strangely distant and unnatural. In the dim candle light his face was hard and expressionless. His men were looking at him wonderingly; he could not explain.

As the marine, with the shackles over his arm, stepped inside the door, the countenance of Don José Antonio turned a fiery red, and then white. He staggered back as if he had been struck in the face. With eyes darting flame, he sprang toward the wall, where hung his sword.

"Chains on me! Sangre de Cristo, never! Sooner will I die here beneath my own roof! Dog are you, who serve a dog of a master."

But he was not quick enough. A stalwart young marine threw his brawny arms about him, and held him fast while another bent to the floor and snapped the shackles on his ankles.

Doors slammed, and with staring eyes and screams of terror, Señora Arillo, Loreto, Manuel, José, and the servants of the household rushed into the room. At the sight of Don José Antonio, his head bent, the tears of anger and shame trickling into his beard, the chains on the floor, there was a piercing wail of utter consternation

from them all,— from alí save Loreto and her mother.

Carroll held up his hand, and his voice, hollow and broken, reached their ears in an unavailing protest.

"Believe me, Señora Arillo, it breaks my heart to do this. But a soldier must obey orders. Perhaps all will be well to-morrow."

The señora had been clinging to her husband, her face wrenched in agony, her cheeks wet with tears. She turned on Carroll a look of fierce, burning hatred.

"You cur!" she cried.

Loreto stood near her, still and white, her hands crossed on her heaving bosom, her eyes wide in trance-like horror.

To her, the man reached his hands imploringly.

"Loreto, you,— surely you understand?"

The black eyes stared blankly into his, and from her ashen lips the words, slow and distinct, cold and cruel, cut him like a lash:

"I pray God that I may never look upon your face again."

With a low moan she sank to the floor, her face buried in her hands.

Mechanically, Carroll gave the necessary orders,—"Shoulder arms, forward, march!" and Don José Antonio Arillo, bareheaded, and surrounded by a ring of pointed bayonets, was led away from his weeping household.

Clank, clank, clank, went the chains at every step across the plaza, their metallic rattle stabbing Carroll to the heart.

Clank, clank, like a death knell in their regularity. Truly, truly, he thought bitterly, it was the death knell of his happiness. Suddenly there flashed on his mind the words of the sightless crone,—"Friendship shall walk in chains; friendship shall walk in chains. Thy heart shall be crushed as by a stone."

Through the still night he moved like an automaton. It was a night of forced doors, of angrily protesting men, weeping women, and screaming children. Ever in his ears was the clank of the chains, and the dull pain in his breast.

To the stockade they brought them; not only Arillo, but little Don Augustin Alvaro, Don Andreas Pico, the brother of the former governor, with Don Jesus Pico, his cousin, Don José Maria Flores, Don Francisco de la Guerra, Don Manuel Garfias, Don Francisco Rico, Dons Leonardo and Francisco Cota, Don Lugo Yorba, aged and worn, and many others, fifteen in all, each and every one dragging the shameful felon's chain.

All night long the terror spread, for already one young soul had gone to meet his God, and his blood cried aloud to his fellow Californians for vengeance.

CHAPTER XI

THE COURIERS OF THE NIGHT

WHEN the answering shot of the sentry flashed through the darkness that fateful midnight, one of the rioters lurched against Palera, a clinging hand caught his sleeve, and a familiar voice gasped,

"Sanguis! I am killed!"

It was Ignacio Reyes, shot through the breast, and while Servolo and Pablo, shocked by the tragic end of their frolic, bore him quickly to his home, the others, ignorant of the tragedy, had scampered away, pleased with the escapade.

Surrounded by his sorrowing mother and sisters, within an hour the boy was dead. As Servolo, shaken by sobs, buried his tear-stained face in the drapery of the bed, the insistent thought, clear and agonizing, saddened his soul and burned in his brain—the thought that it had been his own consent to the wild venture that had sent his friend Ignacio to his sudden fate.

"Ignacio, Ignacio," he whispered piteously, "forgive me, forgive me! I could not know—I could not know." It was to Servolo the second tragedy on his heavy heart.

Pressing his lips to the cold brow of his dead friend, he took leave of the weeping women and

stepped into the still night. As he did so, two figures emerged from the darkness of a neighboring veranda, and Hugo Vanuela asked, in his hoarse whisper:

"Is the boy badly hurt, señor?"

"He is dead," answered Servolo, in a breaking voice.

"Dead,— Jesus Maria! So-o-o." Vanuela drew in his breath with a hissing sound.

"Listen, friend Palera," said the other man. It was MacNamara, and he spoke in a low, thrilling whisper. "It is time for women to weep, but for men to act. It is for us to rouse the pueblo. Let us strike back—strike back in such a manner that the world will hear of it. Are you ready?"

"But to what end, Señor Almagro?"

For it was as Don Pablo Almagro, a Spaniard long resident in Mexico, that MacNamara had been passing among those who knew him in the pueblo.

"To what end? Ah! you do not know—no one knows but our friend Vanuela. You pledge me your word to keep the source of your information to yourself?"

Palera nodded.

"I have secret news from the south that a Mexican army of many thousands is preparing to march north to our assistance."

Palera started, and glanced at Vanuela. Hugo

nodded confirmation, but the darkness hid his sly smile of admiration at the spy's bold, ingenious mendacity.

"We will ride," went on MacNamara, "to every house to-night where there is a man and a gun, and warn them that the stockade will be attacked before noon and that the signal will be three shots from the hilltop. You, my good Servolo, shall fire the shots. Tell them of the murder of Reyes; remind them that there are but fifty men in the stockade. I myself will ride by the river to the south, you through the fields to the north, while Vanuela can rouse those in town.

"Ah! thou art not the man," he continued in his caressing voice, "to let the blood of thy friend and brother go unavenged. Thou art not the man to let pass this occasion to strike a telling blow for thy country, and win honor for the name of Palera. Wilt thou ride with us? Answer quickly, señor, for time passes."

"Santa Madre, yes!" There was a fierce, glad ring in Servolo's voice. "Señor Almagro, I am with you now and always."

A quiet handclasp, and they were on their horses, moving silently through the night.

Others were abroad in the darkness.

A dozen times Palera and MacNamara dodged Lieutenant Somers and his patrol, riding six

abreast down the wide lanes in the outskirts of the pueblo. From behind the corner of an adobe, Hugo Vanuela watched Carroll and his men cross the plaza with Don José Antonio, and as the clank of the chains reached his ears, he muttered, "So-o-o, chains on the proud Arillo! It is music to my ears. Ah, would I could see his face!"

Short was the message that they carried to sleepy men and terrified women during the long hours of that memorable night of September 16, 1846—an army was coming from Mexico —Ignacio Reyes had been shot to death by the Americans—the time had come to fight—there were only fifty men in the stockade, and it would be an easy task to surround and capture them. Quietly were they to gather on all vantage points, and wait for the three signal shots from the hill.

And they did not fail. Calmly the men of the pueblo, Castilian and peon alike, kissed their weeping wives and children farewell and crept secretly through the night, their guns hidden under the voluminous folds of their serapes.

When morning dawned, they were lying concealed on the roofs surrounding the stockade, and hidden behind the crumbling ramparts on the hilltop, waiting impatiently for the signal,—the three warning shots that would mean the opening of the struggle for the mastery of California.



The blunders of Captain Gillie, the intrigues of a British secret agent, and the machinations of a vindictive half-breed, were destined to bear bloody fruit.

The work of Stockton and Fremont had been undone.

CHAPTER XII

WAR

THE morning after the midnight arrests broke cool, calm, and sunless. Along the distant foothills lay a long filmy line of fog, leaving the serrated summits of the range seemingly suspended in the air. Vanished was the noonday vividness of color, the golden brown of the rolling swells, the bright green of the sycamores by the stream, the blue of the winding river. All under the graying sky was softened and subdued to a peaceful, dreamy harmony of color.

Through the weary watches of the night Captain Gillie had tossed and turned on his uneasy couch, harassed by torturing doubts, a prey to a thousand fears. His burst of uncontrollable fury had faded the moment Carroll and his men left the stockade, and the captain had apparently become himself again, contained and self-sufficient, but as ever stubborn and unyielding. But in the morning at roll-call, the lieutenant noted his face, pale and worn, his eyes hollow and weary.

There had been something in the calm, frozen-eyed silence of the manacled men, who though chained of foot and girdled by glistening steel yet had faced him the night before, in the swaying

flare of the torchlight, with heads held high and brows undaunted—a something that had given him pause, with a sense of his own indefinable smallness. Dimly he must have thought, if indeed he had thought of it at all, to have found them crushed and humiliated, craving grace and mercy at his hands. But he knew not their spirit. Beyond one brief negative,—a negative which denied any part or share in the disturbance of the night,—by no further word, look, or sign would they intimate a knowledge even of his very existence. Don José Antonio had folded his arms and looked straight over the captain's head, and Gillie's repeated questionings brought but a curve of contempt to his bearded lips.

Far more hurriedly than was his wont, the captain paced up and down the veranda, his fingers ever pulling and twisting his protuberant under lip. Ever and anon he paused and glanced at the guardhouse, that held the prisoners of the midnight raid. He hurried halfway across the stockade, hesitated again, and with a final toss of his head, strode to the door and ordered them released.

Ominously silent, they stood erect as the marine, kneeling before them, clicked the key in the locks and, one by one, cast away the chains. Very still and very austere were they as they passed, one after another, through the narrow

door, Arillo and Alvaro supporting the half-fainting figure of the aged Don Lugo Yorba. They slowed their steps for a brief moment, glancing at Gillie half expectantly.

Surely, surely, there would be some word of apology, of regret, of explanation. But with one hand on his sword hilt, the other tugging at his lip, he stood wordless, watching them as they went through the big gate swung open before them. Alas for Gillie that he lacked the graces of the old-world courtesy!

As the captain turned away with something akin to a sigh of relief, a ringing sound caught his ear. Marshall was seated on the sand, pounding at the vent hole of one of the spiked cannon. Smiling at the man's persistence, Gillie walked away.

Hour after hour the metallic clang continued. The sun struggled through the clouds, driving the morning mists from the foothills, licking up the stray wisps of fog from the valleys, and chasing the shortening shadows back toward the mountains. The sentry at the gate sought the protection of the veranda shade, and sat with his back to the steps, his head drooping in slumber.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet; Marshall's hammer remained poised in the air, his head erect. Then they both grabbed their carbines and rushed to where, already, two frontiersmen had

climbed the low embankment inside the wall, and were staring up the street toward the plaza.

Wave after wave of cheers flooded the noonday air; not the full-throated roar of the Anglo-Saxon, but the sharp yell, shrill and prolonged, that comes from Latin throats.

"God a'mighty," gasped Brooks, "they've pulled down the flag!"

"Yep," commented Marshall, "them greasers'll be startin' somethin' in about two minutes."

He was picking his flint and looking to his cartridge box as he spoke.

"Cracky, we're in for it now!" yelled Brooks, still peering over the wall. "There's the Mexican flag!" he added, as the red, white, and green with its emblazoned Aztec eagle fluttered to the top of the plaza flagpole.

Even as he spoke, three shots rang out from the hill; a singing bullet flicked up the sand at his feet, and the hillside above the stockade echoed the scattering crackle of musketry. Skipping and ricochetting on the sandy floor, the bullets flew, burying themselves in the adobe walls with a sighing sound, smacking sharply on the brea roofs, and droning overhead like the far-off hum of busy bees.

At the first outburst of firing, the men rushed to arms, and as they piled out of their quarters

Gillie drew his sword, and his figure straightened. In the actual presence of danger the man's figure loomed larger and nobler, and his clouded face cleared.

"Marshall, take a dozen men to the right roof; Brooks, another dozen to the left. Lieutenant Somers, take command at the west wall with ten men; Lieutenant Carroll, to the east gate with the rest."

On the roofs of the adobes about the stockade, on the top of the hill, by the belfry of the church, were the half-hidden forms of armed men. Puffs of white smoke broke out everywhere. In full view on the face of the hill, hidden in the cornfields close at hand, shooting from behind the corners of the buildings on the streets, were the lurking enemy, loading and firing toward the stockade with vicious rapidity.

Up the veranda posts, as agile as monkeys, the frontiersmen had clambered, and they were now lying face down, their heads toward the ridge of the roof. Irregularly their rifles spoke as they sighted a head or an arm on the neighboring buildings.

"Look, over there, Morris," said Marshall to the man near him. "See that fellow climbing up the roof of that 'dobe? Watch me get him." A moment's steady aim, and Marshall's carbine cracked. The climbing man whirled about on

one foot, legs and arms wild-flung, then pitched headlong into the street.

"Got that fellow, too," grinned Morris, as a moment later a Californian who had rashly ventured a bold dash across a street fell forward on his face, kicked spasmodically, and then lay still.

"Carroll," shouted Gillie, "have your men clear the hill. Never mind the roofs."

"Let the houses across the street alone, boys. Get the fellows on the hill. Shoot carefully; pick your men," suggested Carroll.

His voice was cool and deliberate, but within, his heart was aching miserably. Mingled with the sharp cracking of the rifles and the deeper booming of the escopetas, he could almost hear the sibilant words of the Indian woman:

"Blood shall smear your path—shall smear your path."

The irregular sputter of rifles at the gate facing the hill grew into a volleying roar. On the slope a Californian dropped his gun, toppled over, and rolled down. Another slid to the ground; he was grasped and supported by two others, but they too crumpled up, and the three, arms and legs thrashing helplessly, tumbled halfway down the incline, and lay still.

For an hour the fight went on. As the Californians saw their comrades near them totter,

grasp at the empty air, and crash into the street below, their reckless ardor cooled. Slowly, reluctantly, the booming of the escopetas died away, the rifles of the Americans became silent. The unerring aim of the frontiersmen had swept the streets, the houses, and the hill clear of every living thing. Well protected by the adobe walls, the Americans were uninjured; but in the streets and on the hillside lay six silent, sprawling figures, and as many more had crawled home to die.

"Jehosophat!" cried Marshall, as he sprang excitedly to his feet. "See them skedaddle!"

In straggling groups the Californians could be seen racing toward the river, some on horseback, others clinging to the stirrups of the riders. Beyond the stream the plain was dotted with horsemen seeking safety in flight.

The garrison broke into ringing, exultant cheers. The fight was over.

CHAPTER XIII

"SONS OF THE LAND, AWAKE!"

MAC NAMARA, his brow black as night, was one of the first to reach the river. As he sat on his horse, watching the fugitives gallop past, Servolo Palera himself appeared, his face drawn with dismay.

"Be not downcast, friend Palera," said the Englishman as he laid his hand on the other's arm. "It is a long road, this on which we have started, and there are many turnings. Do thou send men to guard all the crossings of the river. Give them instructions to direct every one to ride to the hollow beyond the Paredon Bluff. There we can gather and organize for further action, and there too, my Servolo, thou wilt issue a proclamation that shall make the land ring."

There they gathered behind the great white bluff, a mile down the stream, a confused, discouraged crowd of young men. The older men of the pueblo had, in spite of their midnight arrest, held themselves aloof from the attack.

By the side of the little stream, in the tree-embowered hollow, more than one young man sat on the grass silently weeping for the brother, cousin, or friend he had seen totter and fall, crashing to the street below.

"Madre de Dios," said a boy of sixteen, "but the bullets of the Americans are devil-charmed! Poor Pedro, he did but raise his head above the roof-top, and he died with a small round hole between his eyes."

Gathering them together, Palera addressed them. He was a natural, fervent orator, and soon were their gloomy faces gleaming with renewed ardor and bright with hope. When he announced that he had reliable information that a Mexican army would soon be on the march through Sonora, there was a wild chorus of ecstatic yells. In the background stood MacNamara, moodily chewing a twig. These verbal pyrotechnics were all very necessary, but he hungered for a little less talk and a little more action. On his own suggestion he was placed in charge of the commissary, and before nightfall he had proved his worth. Cattle and sheep were driven into the camp, and butchered on the ground.

Hugo Vanuela rode into the camp during the early afternoon. As his gaze swept the hollow, and he noted the fires where the meat was being roasted, he smiled grimly at these evidences of the work of the ever-active MacNamara.

"Ah, Señor Vanuela," said Palera as he rode up, "well I knew that it would not be long till you would be with us. What news from the pueblo?"

"Nothing, Servolo, nothing. The worthy gentlemen whom Gillie ornamented with chains last night were released this morning, even before the attack, and are still nursing their hurt dignity."

As MacNamara rode up and lightly swung himself to the ground, Palera drew from his clothing a roll of paper.

"Listen, friends, I have drafted a proclamation. The older men among the *gente de razon*, our friend Hugo tells us, hesitate, but let us hope that this will stir their blood."

"*Proclamation of Servolo Palera and other Californians against the Americans:*

"Californians, Mexicans, Sons of the Land, awake, and strike for God and Liberty! Blood has been shed on the streets of Our Lady Queen of the Angels. Homes have been made desolate by the cruelty of the strangers who would conquer us. Shall we be capable of permitting ourselves to be subjugated and to accept their insolence and the heavy yoke of slavery? Shall we, in whose veins flows the blood of the conquistadores, lose the soil inherited from our fathers, the land which cost them so much labor and so much blood? Shall we leave our families victims of the most barbarous servitude? Shall we wait to see our wives outraged, our innocent children beaten by American whips, our property sacked, our temples profaned—to drag out a life of shame and disgrace?

"No, a thousand times no! Death rather than that.

"Who of you does not feel his heart beat fiercely, and his blood boil, on contemplating our impending degradation? Who is the Californian who is not indignant and will not rise in arms to destroy our oppressors?

"We cannot believe that there is one so vile and so cowardly.

"Awake! Sons of the Land! To arms, and the blessing of Heaven will smile on your brave efforts for liberty."

As he read, his fine, youthful face flushed with emotion, his clear voice rose at the end into a triumphant ring.

But there was no responsive glow in the countenances of his two companions. A strange group they were, standing beneath the twisted sycamores through which the sun shot golden splotches on the grass. Palera, quivering with enthusiasm, the other two calm and watchful, each playing at cross purposes—MacNamara supremely sure that he was using them both as pawns in the great game he was playing for the winning of an empire; Vanuela taciturn and somber, impassive as an Indian, but inwardly amused, for he too was playing a game, not for an empire, but for the feeding fat of an ancient grudge.

"Grand words, my Servolo—a ringing proclamation. My congratulations are thine," and MacNamara shook Servolo's hand with a fine show of admiration. As Vanuela followed the example of the Englishman he caught the latter's sidewise glance and noted the sly droop of his eyelid, but refused to smile, and met the secret agent's wink with a cool stare.

"Make for me a copy," Hugo said to Palera, "and I will bring it before the meeting of the Dons this evening."

At the pueblo Gillie had abandoned any attempt to police the town, fearing that his men would be

shot down from behind cover. And Vanuela had been mistaken when he said that the men left in the pueblo were doing nothing. Though they had been released early in the morning, they had taken no part in the wild, scattering, futile attack at midday. But they were desperate men who met at the home of Don Francisco de la Guerra that evening—desperate, outraged, and determined.

For to them had come the news that the aged Don Lugo Yorba was dead. His kindly heart, that had for ninety arid California summers beaten for others, had given way under the sudden strain of the midnight arrest and the crushing shame of the clanking chains. The asperities of Gillie's rule, the killing of Ignacio Reyes, the dozens of homes that were now scenes of heart-rending grief, the crowning personal ignominy of the shackles, had stirred their indolent, peace-loving natures to a pitch of exasperation, and when the news of the death of the kindly, much-loved old man reached them, then passed the last hope of their peaceful acceptance of American rule.

In the temperament of the man of Spanish blood there is much of the tender sentiment of the Celt, but more, much more, of the pride and dignity of the ancient Roman. It was that which the ill-fated Gillie had wounded beyond

forgiveness, in that wild burst of wrath when he had sent Carroll on his vengeful errand.

There was no doubt, no hesitation, no division of opinion now. The Americans had shown themselves unfit to rule a civilized people—as unfit as the fierce Yaquis of Sonora or the wild Apaches beyond the Colorado River.

The Californians had deemed them a great, rich, clever, and magnanimous nation, though somewhat cold and strange in their ways. But they had found them rude in their speech, uncouth in manner, utterly unreasonable and incomprehensible in their governing. To the people of the pueblo the Americans had proved themselves men without dignity, without politeness of word or kindness of heart, without sense of justice or consideration for old age.

True, the Dons had given Stockton their paroles, but had not Captain Gillie relieved them from all obligation by breaking the one unwritten condition—that their persons should be respected? Nothing was there left for men of spirit and honor but to fight. And the short, fierce attack at noonday had shown them that the common people were ready to follow—were now awaiting their leadership.

Then came Vanuela to the council when they were mentally, at least, prepared for war. Calmly and with austere dignity they listened to his

message, for he was no favorite among them. As he told them, in a few short, sharp sentences that, whether they would or no, the people were ready to fight, there was a tinge of defiance, something of scorn in his manner. He was gazing into their unfriendly eyes. God, how he hated them all, from the princely Arillo at the head of the table to the weazened Alvaro at the foot! But war must make them comrades.

"That is my message, *caballeros*—three hundred men under arms, by the Paredon Bluff, and here is their voice," he said, as he read the proclamation.

In their faces was a vague dissatisfaction. This young man, Palera, hardly more than a boy, a maker of poems, who was still singing at the windows of the girls, had launched a revolt without even consulting the great ones of the land. There was a depressing silence in the room when Vanuela finished the last words of Servolo's appeal.

"Por Dios," said Don Augustin Alvaro to Don Andreas Pico, "the young Palera writes as well as he sings."

The younger brother of Governor Pio Pico was a slim young man with a face wonderfully fair for a man of Spanish blood. Not even the gravity of the occasion had driven the happy smile from a countenance that was full of good nature and radiant with the joy of life. As he

noted Hugo's air of truculent assurance, the merry face of Don Andreas lit up with half-scornful amusement. Leaning toward De la Guerra, he whispered:

"Ayer vaquero
Hoy caballero." [1]

De la Guerra's eyes twinkled, but there was no levity in his manner as his cool glance met Vanuela's.

"I am glad to be able to tell the señor," he said with hauteur, "that we had already determined on resistance before his message arrived."

Arillo, who had been stroking his beard thoughtfully, remarked with a quiet, half-humorous smile:

"Friends, friends, let us now be frank. It is no time for jealousies. Truly, young blood is always hasty, yet who will say that this is not a time for haste? The young men have outstripped us. Let us rather rejoice at that, not regret it—though doubtless we would have been better pleased if we had arranged it ourselves. But we could not—most of us being in chains."

Spurred on by the knowledge that the revolt was no longer a vague, disorganized outburst, and that there was an armed force behind them, they acted quickly. Don José Maria Flores, a

[1] "Yesterday a cowherder,
To-day a gentleman."

captain in the Mexican army who had seen much service in the wars against the Yaquis, and who had been spending his furlough in California when the war began, was chosen commandant and governor.

Don José Antonio was to be second in command, with the title of colonel. Don Andreas Pico and Don Manuel Garfias were appointed by Flores captains of the two squadrons of cavalry. Don Augustin Alvaro was to be "Capitan Auxiliar" attached to the staff of the commandant. Don Jesus Pico, a cousin of Don Andreas, was to leave in the morning for San Luis Obispo, while Garfias would ride at once to Santa Barbara, bearing news of the revolt. Before evening fell, countless couriers were sent galloping through the adjacent country to spread the alarm to the ranchos.

Out to the encampment by the Paredon Bluff rode Flores and Arillo. They were received with wild acclaim, and with full accord of all they assumed command. Servolo Palera was appointed brevet captain, and dispatched with eighty men toward the Cucamonga Cañon for the purpose of capturing Benito Willard and his militia company.

The ringing words of Palera were answered. The *Hijos del pais* were awake at last.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BLACK MATADOR

MANUEL ARILLO had just finished oiling the lock of a battered old fowling piece, and he looked at it lovingly as he held it with outstretched arm.

"Por Dios," he said, "though old, it is still a good gun. Dost thou think, my José, that father will let us go to fight the Americans when the time comes?"

They were seated on the broad veranda that bordered the three sides of the garden behind the Arillo home. Lithe and vigorous were the boys, with the clear eyes and well-knit frames that told of life in the open and long hours in the saddle.

José turned his slow, gray eyes away from the distant ridges, and with a quick, awakening motion brushed back the heavy lock of red hair from his forehead.

"That I cannot tell, Manuel, but Señor De la Guerra said only last night, even in this very house, that every one between the ages of sixteen and sixty would be called to go."

"The saints grant that he spoke truly." As Manuel wiped the oil from his soiled fingers his sharp glance noted the other's moody and

distraught air. His countenance lighted with mischievous merriment.

"Thinking again, José? Thou wilt tire that fine red head of thine with overmuch work. Is it Delfina, or some other fair lady, that brings that far-away look into thy face?"

José frowned, but the frown melted into a smile.

"No, no, Manuel; I have been thinking—of what I can remember."

"Was it that sent thee wandering in thy night garb in the plaza last night?" he teased. Then Manuel's bantering air suddenly vanished, and in his voice there was much of sympathy as he added quickly:

"I do not wonder that it makes thee sad. Tell me again, if thou wilt, what thou canst remember of the days of thy babyhood."

After a moment's thought, José answered slowly: "'Tis little enough, and I cannot remember whether or no much of what comes to me be dreams, or in truth memories.

"I remember," he said hesitatingly, as if not sure of his ground, "a house in a narrow street where donkeys with loads of wood on either side of their backs passed each day. In a large room in front, at a desk with many papers, there sat a man—my father, I think. There was a lady. She was my mother, I'm sure, for she used to kiss me at night. That is what comes

to me at the very first, but it is all very dim, and perhaps is only what I have dreamed, for of those two I have dreamed often. Be they true memories or but dreams, I fear I shall never know," and he sighed softly.

"But plainly, very plainly, do I remember one night in the street. I was running in much fear, from what I do not know. Around me were others in the dark, running wildly as well. Of that I am sure. That is not a dream."

"How old wert thou, José?"

"I cannot say, but very, very small. After that it was all indistinct again. I was with the Indians in the mountains, in their brush huts, and again often with them by the seashore, for in that land the mountains came down close to the sea. One day, when playing in a boat in a sheltered bay, the wind carried me out on the wide water, and, tired and hungry, I slept. How long I slept I know not, but when I awoke I was in a ship with many sailors; then for many days and nights I lay sick, near unto death. The captain was kind to me, not like to some other captains afterwards; but he died—drowned one night when our ship went ashore, and all but four of the sailors were drowned with him."

"And those?" Manuel had heard the tale from José's lips a hundred times, but for him it had never lost its fascination.

José placed his hands over his eyes, and his shoulders shook in a little shiver. "Some brown men like negroes killed them with clubs and ate them, and me, too, they would have killed in time, but that another captain bought me with a roll of red cloth from a man with a ring in his nose and marks on his face and chest. And with that captain I stayed until he beat me, and then I ran away to another ship in the port of Mazatlan in Mexico. And always have I been 'José'; nothing but 'José.' The rest you know, Manuel."

The boy nodded. Often had he heard his father tell of the furious storm ten years before that had driven a strange bark on the rocky point near San Pedro, and of how he had ordered his Indians and vaqueros to bury the drowned sailors in the sands of the sea beach. But the heart of one, a boy of eight, was still beating, and they brought him to life, warming him over a fire of driftwood and pouring strong, hot drinks down his throat, for it was a chill December day. Don José Antonio's kindly heart went out to the homeless lad, and he had taken him to his own home, where they had all learned to love him as their very own.

Spanish he spoke, but of a strange sort, with many unintelligible words that, as the years went on, he forgot. "Jose el Rufo (Joseph the

Red-Head)" they called him far oftener than "José Arillo." José's hair was red with the redness of fire, at which the people of the pueblo marveled greatly. His was the only red head in all Los Angeles.

That he was not of Spanish blood the señora always maintained, for though he was quick of thought he was chary of sudden speech and slow of anger, and there brooded in his face a wistful melancholy and the look of one who was ever seeking to grasp, with the grip of the mind, something that eluded him.

"Most often of all, Manuel," he continued, "does there come to me the dream of my father at his desk, with the flag spread on the wall behind him. His face I can see plainly, but the flag not so. And he always looks at me, so straight, and when I rush to him I always wake. Last night I dreamed of him so. But sometime,— sometime I am sure, Manuel,— I know not why, but still am I certain that I shall reach him, and that time I shall not wake. I believe he still lives."

"Why thinkest thou so?"

"Because always, always, I come to him a little nearer, to where he sits at the table, his pen in his hand, and the flag outspread behind his head. For he knows me, Manuel. I can see it in the glad look in his face, and often he

rises a little in his chair. And then I wake," he added mournfully

José had acquired much of the fine idealism of the cultured family that had raised him, and it added greatly to his prepossessing personality.

"Yi, yi, José, do not think of it so much if it makes thee sad. I do not think of sad things, and so am ever happy," and Manuel's white teeth showed in a sweet smile in which there was all the glad irresponsibility of youth.

As Manuel, whistling cheerily, gun in hand, left the veranda, a young woman stepped from one of the rooms of the east wing. It was Delfina, an orphan girl who, as a motherless babe, had been adopted by the señora. She was small and pretty, with a pert face, and her merry, saucy eyes, as they met José's, brought a glad radiance to the boy's face.

"Come sit by me, Delfina; I have something to say to thee."

She took her seat on the end of the bench, and drawing some lacework from the little bag at her waist, said warningly:

"Keep thy distance, José. The señora may see us."

"May I not speak to Don José Antonio to-night, Delfina?"

"Ah, yi, yi, but you are a foolish boy to pester Don José Antonio when his mind is full of the

great affairs of the land. Truly thou art, after all, but a boy."

"A boy!" Jose protested indignantly. "I am as tall as the Don himself, and two fingers taller than Manuel."

"Thou art but seventeen —"

"But near to eighteen," he protested.

"Well, but eighteen then, though big for thy age. But, Santa Madre, it would be madness to talk to the Don when there is shooting and killing in the town. Do you note how he frowns all day, and speaks but little?"

As she scanned José's face with quick, sidewise glances the mischief sparkled in her eyes and dimpled her cheeks.

"Those who are truly men," she teased, "are not now sitting at the feet of their ladies, sighing like the wind in the trees. They are yonder, by the Paredon Bluff, with arms in their hands, advising as to the best way to wrest the land from the Americans."

Her dexterous white fingers wrought busily with the lace, but while her tone and manner were maddening, there was a gleam of pride in her dark face as she measured with her eye the breadth of the boy's shoulders and marked his downcast looks. He was truly a dear boy, but it was rare sport to see him frown so mightily, to have him rumple his red hair until it stood on

end, and to have his big gray eyes turned up to her, pathetically beseeching.

"Go to the war, and get thyself a name, a great name," she added teasingly, "and then, perchance, the Don will listen to thee."

José's face flared red as his bristling locks, and his mouth grew tight. True, he had no name. Or if he had, he knew it not. The girl's words were idle, thoughtless, but they had wounded him deeply.

"As you bid me, I will go, Delfina, if the Don will let me." He rose to his feet, and stood looking at her for a moment, his face pale now and his lip quivering a little.

"Yes, I will go and find myself a name, or —I shall not come back."

Señora Arillo appeared suddenly on the threshold, and her eyes scrutinized them suspiciously.

"Delfina, it is time the chickens were fed. José, find Mariano, and send him to me."

As the woman sat alone on the veranda overlooking the garden, her fingers nervously tapping her knee and plaiting the stuff of her skirt backward and forward, her eyes again sought the far corner where the roses bloomed. From the satisfied smile on her handsome, mature face it was plain that her thoughts were happy.

"It belonged to the church, and to the church

it shall return when the war is over. Not a heretic hand shall touch it," she murmured.

The sudden outburst of hostilities had brought little terror to the soul of Señora Arillo. With silent indignation she had watched the flight of Pico and Castro and the tame acceptance of American rule by the men of the pueblo. Now, in the blind sincerity of her primitive faith, the reopening of the struggle was but the answer that Heaven had accorded to the endless petitions she had poured forth at the feet of the Virgin. Woman-like, she flinched at the thought of her husband and the boys in the deadly tumult of battle, but her firm faith upheld her. Surely the Virgin and the saints, who had already answered her prayers, would not forsake her then. As for the young American who had so cleverly won the high regard of her husband and the love of her daughter, he was certainly a fine young man, but he was doubtless like other men, and could forget. If he did come back after the war was over—well, that was a problem that could be settled when it arrived, if it ever did.

Mariano, a thick-set, roughly-clad, brown-faced man, in whose high cheekbones showed something of the Indian, came slowly up the garden path from the outhouses.

"The padrona sent for me?" he inquired deferentially.

"When do they attack the Americans again, Mariano?"

"That I cannot say, señora, but I think to-morrow night."

She glanced around her, and stepping to the door looked within, but there was no one in sight.

"Attend closely, Mariano. Have ready shovels, picks, and ropes. We will dig it up and deliver it to the Commandant Flores after the next attack. Have also a *carreta* and oxen close at hand. Now, remember, not a word to any one."

Mariano nodded his black head comprehendingly, and as he twirled the rim of his big sombrero over and over in his gnarled hands, there was grim satisfaction in his otherwise stupid face.

All the long day had Loreto kept her room, appearing only at meals, with a face so woefully swollen with tears that the Don had taken her little chin in his hand and said, in his strong, calm way:

"Mary and the angels protect thee, but it is a heavy burden for thy young shoulders to carry. Ask thy patron saint to make it come right in the end, child."

"Do not sorrow so," said her mother, when Don José Antonio had left the house. "Thinkest thou there are not other men in the world? Yi, yi, when the war is over, and a new governor comes from Mexico with many fine young officers

in his train, in gold lace and nodding plumes, little wilt thou think of the American. Though I cannot deny," she added, "that I like him far better than I like his country."

Loreto turned on her mother a slow, wondering gaze, and her lips trembled for a moment, but she lowered her eyes and remained silent. Sleep came not to her that night. With all the maddening clearness of midnight impression there thronged on her the scenes of the night before,—her father struggling, enwrapped in the arms of the marine, the horror of the chains, the cold, set face of Carroll, the appeal in his voice as he turned to her, and, clearest of all, her own cruel words.

The first fierce flush of her fury had passed, and her heart was now pleading for him. It was the orders of Captain Gillie. What could he have done but obey? With something akin to a shock, she realized for the first time that he too must be suffering, and a great longing possessed her to recall her bitter words. If she could only let him know that, come what might, she was his and his alone! But there was no way; between herself and the worn-eyed, heavy-hearted man in the stockade only a few hundred yards away, heavy, black, and impenetrable lay the shadow of the sword.

Kneeling at the barred window, she gazed out

at the black sky pulsating with living, scintillating stars. She would ask for divine assistance, ask that in some way, somehow, there should be sent to him the knowledge that she no longer blamed him for the deeds of the night before. Slowly the beads slipped through her fingers, and as she finished she laid her fevered brow on the cool windowsill, and whispered into the darkness.

"Oh, Mary, Mother of Sorrows, tell him, put it in his heart and in his mind, that I still love him. Protect him, and save him from all harm."

From beyond the plaza came shrill yells, and an outburst of firing. The beads dropped from her fingers to the floor, and she wept piteously.

"Child," came a whisper from the darkness, a whisper singularly soft and clear, "thy prayer is heard. What message didst thou wish to send the American?"

Close to the bars the figure of a man loomed faintly in the darkness. Her heart stood still, while a wave of terror swept over her, paralyzing her to the very roots of her hair, and numbing her finger tips in its icy chill. The figure wore an old-fashioned hat, flat and round; the face was covered with a corner of the cloak. There could be no mistake—it was the Black Matador! Her limbs were giving way beneath her, and she felt herself sinking to the floor.

"Child," came the voice again, gently reassuring, "have no fear. I have been sent to help thee, not to harm thee. What message wilt thou send to the American? I am a friend."

Was it a dream, or was she mad? Was the dim shape before her, that darker spot in the obscurity, but a vision of her own disordered fancy? A call would bring her mother and the servants rushing into the room.

"Make no sound—do not call—the Black Matador sorrows for those who sorrow, but he serves only those who will it. If I go from thee empty-handed now, I cannot come again. 'Tis mortal sin to scorn the help that Heaven sends."

To her fading senses the voice seemed far-off and unreal, but there was in it a gentleness that stilled her fears. She crossed herself thrice, and felt assured that no bodily harm could assail her.

Quickly as it had come, her terror fled. Be it ghost, man, or devil, she would not scorn his aid. There was no hesitation now. Fumbling with quivering fingers in the darkness, she found the quill pen and wrote quickly on the flyleaf of her prayer book:

"I meant not what I said. I love thee.
"LORETO."

Again she crossed herself thrice, and passed the missive out into the darkness. Icy cold were

the fingers that met hers. At the ghostly touch she lost her courage, and swooned. From beyond the plaza the guns spluttered again for a moment, and died away. Out in the open there was only darkness.

Came morning. The girl opened her eyes, and smiled at the strangeness of her fancied midnight vision. In vain she tried to shake off the impression. As she knelt in her nightrobe to pray, she saw on the floor a folded paper, white and glaring in the gray light of the dawn. Round-eyed, she stared at it, wondering, fearing. Then, with trembling fingers, she opened it and read:

"Thy message has made me happy. Be confident. All will come right in the end.

"JACK."

As the conviction grew upon her that the experience of the night was no dream, and that her dark-garbed visitor was none other than the Black Matador, serving her in obedience to a higher power, she trembled again with the overpowering fear of the unknown.

And yet it was not so strange. For were not the books Father Estenaga at the Plaza Church had given her to read full of wondrous tales of prayers heard and favors granted? Was not God as powerful and the Virgin as kind and loving now as then?

Filled with the simple, childlike faith of the Spanish woman, she fell on her knees and poured forth her soul in thanks. And in her face, no longer sorrowful, was a light that caused the señora to wonder and Delfina to cross herself in awe.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTAIN'S DEFIANCE

THROUGH their field glasses the American officers had witnessed the wild scurry of the fugitives across the stream, but they knew nothing of the rendezvous behind the Paredon Bluff. Several roads led to the ravine, one skirting the river bank, others over the neighboring hills, and as the horsemen disappeared in various directions the Americans hastily concluded that they were seeking safety at the distant ranchos.

"Naw," Marshall was saying, "them fellows ain't quit, not by a long shot. There're just gettin' their second wind."

Ignoring the bantering remarks of his comrades, he spent the afternoon at work on the cannon, both of which he had now mounted on carreta wheels, tying them securely in place with rawhide riatas. In spite of his industrious hammering he had not as yet been able to remove the spiking from the vent holes.

It was nearing midnight when the frontiersman on guard at the east gate detected subdued sounds close at hand in the darkness. Then came the soft shuffling of feet on the sand, and the heavy breathing of burdened men. As he leaned over the wall, his eyes and ears strained to utmost

tension, a wild chorus of yells came from below, and the timbers of the gate bent and creaked under the impact of a heavy blow. But well had Marshall done his work. The gate stood fast. The men on duty, seated on the verandas or sprawling half asleep in the sand, rushed to their posts, and with a volleying roar a long line of thin spitting streaks of flame burst from the wall. In the momentary flash was revealed a huddled mass of men ranged along both sides of a heavy log. Cries of pain and dismay were followed by the swift patter of running feet, and the hush of night again fell on the stockade.

Carroll took charge at midnight, relieving Lieutenant Somers and his men. As he restlessly paced the sandy floor of the stockade, the unhappy man longed vainly for the power to read the future. But a few hours ago his whole life was bright with a glad radiance, whose glory seemed to stretch down the coming years, and now the future seemed as dark and gloomy as the inky sky above him.

Vividly she flashed on his memory as he had seen her that Sunday morning in the church, and the night when he had saved her from the drunken straggler in the plaza. But last of all, burned in his brain the memory of the deadly pallor of her face as her lips hissed the words that forever cut him out of her life. Well he knew the strength

of family ties among people of Spanish blood, the reverence that is paid to the father as the head of the household, the deep sense of personal dignity, and his heart ached within him. Awed and wondering, he recalled the warning words of the Indian woman:

"The great hearts thou reverest shall be humbled. Friendship shall walk in clanking chains. Thy heart shall be crushed as by a stone."

From the west gate came the sound of excited whispers, and after Carroll had stood listening attentively for a moment, he strode over to the wall.

"Step up here, lieutenant," whispered a marine. "See if you can see anything down there. Brooks says there is something moving, close to the gate. Look! Right down there!" He covered the spot with his rifle. "Say the word, and I'll fire."

"Señor, do not fire," came from the darkness a muffled voice in Spanish. "I mean no harm. I wish only to deliver a message."

"Keep him covered, Carruthers. Now, who are you? Do you come from the enemy? Have you a communication for the commanding officer?" asked Carroll.

"I have a note for Lieutenant Carroll."

Out of the black reek in front of the Americans rose a slender rod, a white paper folded around

its end. As the lieutenant reached for it, his fingers trembled with excitement.

"Stay where you are, down there," he said in Spanish. "Not a movement, or you will be fired on." Then to the marines: "Both of you keep him covered, and fire at the least move."

With wildly beating heart, Carroll hurried into the building and held Loreto's note close to the candle flame. And as he refolded it and placed it in his wallet, his eyes were moist with joy. Hastily scribbling an answer, he returned to the wall.

"Can you return an answer?" he whispered into the darkness.

"I can." And then, as Carroll reached down the rod, "I have it. Adios, señor," and he was gone.

The marine giggled. "I reckon the lieutenant has a girl among the greasers," he drawled.

"None of your business if he has," snarled a frontiersman. "He's all right, even if he has a dozen."

Carroll paced again the long, dark veranda during the quiet hours till morning. Who could the message bearer be? He thought of José, of Manuel, but neither of them would have undertaken such a dangerous errand; and the voice of the stranger was one he believed he had never before heard.

A scrambling, sliding sound on the roof above caused the lieutenant to halt suddenly, walk down the steps, and, pistol in hand, gaze up at the sloping roof.

"Don't shoot," came a low voice, from the darker blot of shadow on the edge. "Look out below—I'm comin' down."

A man slid to the ground, landing cat-like on his feet. Jim Marshall, as he picked up his hat and replaced it on his head, was grinning half-apologetically at the officer.

"Marshall," said Carroll in a stern tone, "have you a leave of absence from the captain?"

The frontiersman shook his head.

"This passes all patience,—absent from the post at such a time as this!" continued the lieutenant. "Three times this month you have been absent without leave. You are under arrest. Brooks, place the prisoner in the guard-house. The captain will dispose of his case in the morning."

Marshall raised his hand respectfully to his hat brim.

"All right, all right, lieutenant. I ain't kickin' none," he remarked, as he followed the marine.

Silently the gray dawn crept over the eastern hills, and hardly had the last notes of the morning bugle died away when there was a burst of firing, and the grumbling, breakfastless men again

rushed to their positions, the frontiersmen to the roofs and the marines to the gates. The Californians, profiting by the lesson of yesterday's attack, had carefully concealed themselves, and not a marksman could be seen, though the bullets were singing above the stockade and kicking up the dust in the open. High up on the hill spurts of smoke broke from the old ramparts, but nothing save the protruding rifle barrels were visible.

"I've got a notion to put a bullet into one of them shuttered windows, just to get even," remarked a disgusted riflemen, as he primed his flintlock.

"Don't ye do it, Morris," protested Jim Marshall, who had been released when the attack began; "ye'd probably kill a woman if ye did. I'll bet they're watchin' this show through the cracks. Wait! See the head of that horse sticking out from behind that adobe?"

The frontiersman fired as he spoke, and the animal, with an agonizing scream, broke its tether, sprang into full view, and rolled over in the street. A marine, close to Carroll at the east gate, gurgled and tottered backward, shot through the neck. With his hands on the sand, he raised his shoulders from the ground, a look of agony on his face; then the blood spurted in a red streak from his throat. A moment later a frontiersman

drew up his legs with a groan, and rolled slowly off the roof.

The Americans, sobered by the sudden death of two of their number, were loading rapidly, and firing deliberately at every puff of smoke. There was none of the idle chaffing of yesterday, and their faces wore an expression of tensest determination. Not for nothing had MacNamara, the evening before, impressed upon the Californians the absolute necessity of keeping under cover and of changing their positions after each shot. They were obeying his suggestions faithfully, and the bullets of the Americans, though they crashed into the corners of the buildings and flicked the dust from the tops of the old ramparts on the hill, did no execution.

"Flag of truce coming up the street, captain," called a marine from the east gate.

"Cease firing," the bugle blared. "Hold your fire!" called Gillie. "Keep your streets covered from the gates, but admit them."

The big bars crossing the east gate were laboriously lifted, and as it yawned open, two Californians entered. They stepped quickly to the center of the stockade, where Gillie awaited them, his sword point on the ground, his hands clasped over the hilt. The young officer in advance of the white flag halted a few feet in front of the American, saluted, and brought

his heels together with a military click, while his sharp eyes swept the interior of the stockade, the mounted guns, the two bodies on the ground, and the men on the roofs.

"Captain Gillie?" he inquired in excellent English. Gillie nodded.

"I have the honor to make a formal demand for a surrender of your position."

"What terms have you to offer?"

Along the roofs were seated the frontiersmen, facing the inclosure, their knees drawn up to their chins, their heels digging into the slanting roofs. As the question asked by the captain reached their ears there was a unanimous gasp of surprise, and muttered curses ran along the line as they looked at one another.

The short-clipped utterance of the Californian came clearly to them in the stillness.

"You will haul down your flag, turn over your arms, horses, and ammunition, and surrender yourselves as prisoners of war."

Gillie was scanning the young man's face curiously.

"Who are you, anyway?" he asked bluntly.

"Don José Maria Flores, in command of the troops now serving under the Mexican flag in our territory of Alta California," he said superciliously, as he twirled his curled mustache with a nonchalant air, and glared haughtily at Gillie.

"We have now over three hundred men under arms," he continued, "and in a few days it will be a thousand. Your position here is utterly untenable, and I pledge you my word that the persons of you and your men shall be unharmed. You will have four hours to consider the matter."

"The word of a man who has already broken his parole of honor is but poor security," said Gillie, not in a taunting tone, but with the air of one stating a regretable fact.

Flores' face reddened. "When I and the others gave you our paroles, Captain Gillie," he said, not without a certain dignity, "it was with the understanding that our persons should be respected. How the promise was kept, let the story of two nights ago tell. You, captain, were the first to break the terms of the parole."

"Jehosophat," chuckled Marshall, "listen to that now, will you? He certainly landed one on the captain that time. There's more than a grain of truth in what he says."

Gillie was silent, pondering in his slow way the last words of Flores. His hand wandered to his lower lip. Again consternation appeared in the faces of the men on the roof.

"By God," muttered a frontiersman in a voice that trembled with indignation, "if he's going to give up —"

"Now hold your horses, Frank," warned Jim

Marshall. "Keep cool—keep cool. The captain is several kinds of a durn fool, but he's no coward."

Gillie smiled in his twisted way. "You are very kind, señor, but your four hours' time is unnecessary. I can answer you now."

"Then you surrender?"

The captain turned and, pointing toward the flag flying above the heads of the frontiersmen, "When that flag comes down," he said in a louder tone, "if it ever does, it will not be taken down by American hands. Come and take it down yourselves. Our answer is—no!" he thundered.

To their feet jumped the men on the roof. With hats in one hand, their rifles in the other, they cheered him, cheered till their faces were red, cheered till their voices were hoarse, cheered till they stopped only through sheer exhaustion.

They had defied him, they had hated him, they had ignored and broken all his regulations for the governing of the post. Most of them had spent long, weary hours in confinement by his order. They knew, in their careless way, that he had somehow failed in his management of them and in his relations with the Californians. Among themselves they had cursed him, many a time, fluently, bitterly, and eloquently, to their hearts' satisfaction. But in that one last spoken word he had come to his own again. He was

their leader—a leader they would follow to the very gates of hell.

The two Californians looked up, awed by the avalanche of sound.

"Permit me," said Flores courteously, "to congratulate you on the spirit of your men. It is so different from what one would expect," he added maliciously. "In ten minutes we shall resume firing. I have the honor to bid you good day."

He saluted stiffly and, with his companion, marched out the stockade gate.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RACE FOR THE HILLTOP

DON JOSE MARIA FLORES, commander in chief of the Californians, was a fiery-eyed, handsome man of thirty. Grandiloquent in speech, pompous in manner, he was nevertheless a capable and courageous officer.

He had exaggerated but little when he boasted to Gillie that there were now three hundred Californians under arms, though the truth was that only half of them had guns, and those, old fowling pieces. The rest were armed with lances made by fastening a steel point to the end of a ten-foot willow shaft. Under cover of night the men who had met at the Paredon Bluff had slipped silently back to the city, leaving their horses in charge of a squad at the river, or hidden behind the buildings. When the assault was made on the stockade, two hundred of them were waiting in the darkness, across the street, ready to rush the gate had it given way before the battering ram.

"Bah, it is nothing," said MacNamara, when the news of the repulse reached them. "Recruits are coming in every hour. We can harass the Americans night and day, till they will have time neither to sleep nor to eat. We can simply

tire them out." And this was the plan that had been adopted.

In an old deserted adobe near the river, well protected from the American rifles by a dense peach orchard located on a rise in the ground, the Californian officers had established headquarters. Here, the morning after the attempt to ram the gate, they were holding a consultation. All were present except Arillo, who was at San Gabriel searching for arms; Servolo Palera and Diego Sepulveda, who had left at sunrise in pursuit of Willard's company; and Vanuela, who was riding the country between the pueblo and the sea, warning the *rancheros* to drive their cattle away from the beach, so that in case reinforcements for Gillie arrived from the north the invaders would find no means of sustenance as they marched inland.

From where they sat on the veranda they could see, over the tops of the peach trees, the rounded summit of the hill, and the flagpole of the stockade, where the American colors fluttered in the morning breeze. The firing was going on steadily, the sharp crack of the rifles mingling with the deeper booming of the escopetas.

"Would it not be well, Almagro, to again summon them to surrender?" Flores asked of MacNamara, who sat at his elbow.

There was respectful deference in the tones of

the commandant. By judicious use of the subtle flattery at which he was an expert, the secret agent had won for himself a high place in the regard of Flores.

"Not yet—not just yet," he cautioned. "Let this attack continue for at least an hour—long enough for them to realize that they are again surrounded, and that we are in earnest this time."

"Oh, for artillery, for even one cannon," sighed Flores, "to blow down that accursed gate, and they would be ours."

"Why not wish for a dozen *arrobas* of powder, or an army of ten thousand from Sonora? It is easy—wishing," remarked Don Augustin Alvaro, as he took a pinch of snuff. He did not like Flores, and was at no pains to conceal it.

MacNamara's brows were knit in troubled thought, and his fingers played nervously in the depths of his black beard. He had been considering the advisability of riding to Santa Barbara, where the British vessels lay at anchor, and attempting to secure two or three pieces of cannon from the commodore. But the distance was great, and he was doubtful of the result. For though the commodore was well acquainted with him as Father MacNamara, and was familiar with the whole matter of the land grant, it was questionable whether the naval officer would

approve of the rôle MacNamara was at present playing, or that he would give him the guns while the result of the revolt was still in doubt.

The sound of running feet caused them to turn their heads, and a red-headed young man shot across the open space in front of the house, and rushed up to the veranda. It was José, breathless and hatless, and as he faced the officers, and leaned with one hand against the veranda post, he gasped:

"A cannon, caballeros! A cannon!"

"Caramba!" exclaimed Flores, springing to his feet. "Have the Americans unspiked the old guns? I saw them in the stockade."

"No," panted José; "it is for us. It is in the garden of Señora Arillo. Mariano is digging it up now. The señora sent me; she says that it is time you should have it."

There was now no colorful patch of roses in the patio of the Arillo home, but instead a yawning hole where, since the night before the arrival of Stockton a month before, had been buried the brass cannon of the plaza, which for years had stood in front of the church and had roared forth its salutes on many a feast day.

"Por Dios," the señora had said as she rose that August night from her bed, "the heretics shall not have the cannon of the church." In the silent night, with the help of the ever-devoted

Mariano, she had dragged it to her garden, the rawhide thongs bruising her arms, and bringing the blood dripping from her fingers—all of which she had borne with a glad, fierce joy for the greater glory of God.

"Santa Madre, that is welcome news!" exclaimed Flores. "Blow the bugle," he commanded the boy at his side, "that the firing may cease. Meanwhile, I will again summon the Americans to surrender. Do you, Almagro, see if the boy's tale be true; but remember—our word of honor is pledged. Not a thing of preparation must be done while the white flag flies. When the bugle sounds again, three long notes, the truce is at an end."

At the end of a second interview with Gillie, an interview which terminated in a still more emphatic negative from the American commander, Flores left the stockade, a grim smile on his handsome face. Almost immediately the three bugle notes rang out, and the firing was resumed more fiercely than before.

The day was stifling hot, and the men on the sloping roofs of the stockade swore fervently as the sweat trickled down their faces and into their eyes. Marshall was not on the roof. He had ignored Gillie's orders, and the clang of his hammer as he bent over his cannon could be heard occasionally between the bursts of firing.

Suddenly, without warning, the Californian fire dwindled down to a few scattering shots, and then ceased. From the north end of the plaza came thundering cheers—cheers in which there was a joyous note of triumph.

Marshall, dropping his hammer, rushed to the west gate, climbed upon the ledge, and craned his neck over the wall. For a moment he stood as rigid as a statue.

"There you are, Gillie," he roared, jumping down from the ledge and throwing up his arms in his excitement. "Come here and see that gun I told you about two weeks ago, and you would n't believe me. There it is now, coming down the street.

"Shoot, you fellows up there, shoot!" he yelled. "For God's sake, shoot! Get the men around that gun!"

"They are going up the hill with it," shouted a man on the roof, and the rifles of the frontiersmen broke out in a scattering volley. But it was too late; both men and cannon had already disappeared beyond the church.

Marshall acted like one possessed. Placing a file in the vent of the cannon, he rained on it thundering blows with a sledge, his face red and the sweat trickling down his cheeks. Suddenly the file gave way and sank half its length into the hollow of the gun.

"Through, by God!" he panted.

"Here, boys, come down off that roof," he roared, "and empty your cartridges—quick, for God's sake!" He bit the end of a paper cartridge and emptied the contents into his big hat. In one minute the hat was full, the gun loaded and rammed. Gillie, utterly ignored in the excitement, stood fingering his lip and staring moodily at the scene of feverish activity.

"Open the gate!" Marshall shouted in authoritative tones. "Quick, now! Who's comin' with me to the top of the hill? They've got the start, but let us race them for it. Come on, boys."

With a glad shout, a dozen grasped the rawhide axle ropes and dragged the reeling gun across the street. It was a heavy, clumsy thing, but there were twelve strong men on the ropes, and up the steep east slope they clambered, now falling and slipping, now grasping the grass roots and projecting stones.

Breathless with excitement and anxiety, the men in the stockade watched them. It was a race for the top of the hill, and the winner of the race would command the town. For if the Californians, now clambering up the hidden north slope, reached the top first, the little garrison at the stockade would be at their mercy. Marshall and his men were close to the top when

the gun, toppling over and on its side, slipped downward, and a groan broke from the anxious watchers at the wall. But Marshall, ever in the advance, at the end of the longest riata, quick as lightning snubbed it over a projecting stone, holding it securely till again the gun was righted.

"Cover the top of the hill," ordered Carroll, "and fire at the first head that appears. Do not wait for orders. Fire on sight."

On struggled Marshall and his men, close to the top now, working like fiends. At last the gun rolled easily over the flat space on the summit of the hill. Over it for an instant bent a marine. Then, with a roar, it spit a rolling burst of white smoke, shrouding the men on the hill in billowing clouds.

A breathless moment,—then, as the smoke drifted away, the men around the old field piece threw up their hats, danced like maniacs, and the hills reëchoed their shouts of triumph.

Marshall had won the race; the Americans had captured the hill.

The single shot aimed by the marine had struck the enemy's gun fairly, knocking it from its carriage and tumbling it down the hill, while its defenders rushed madly for cover, leaving one of their number dead on the slope.

At the west wall all were cheering wildly—all except Carroll. He did not hear them. His

heart was heavy within him. In his ears were ringing the words of the Indian woman:

"Blood shall smear your path. Sad and long is the way, and filled with woe."

CHAPTER XVII

THE MIDNIGHT SORTIE

CAPTAIN GILLIE was sadly shaken by the events of the last few hours. As a subordinate, carrying out the clearly defined orders of a superior officer, his conscientious attention to detail would have brought to him a large measure of success. But in an environment like the present, where quick thought and instantaneous action were an absolute necessity, he was completely at sea. For the first time since taking command of the garrison, he consulted with his officers, Lieutenants Carroll and Somers, as to the best course to follow. The captain was considering the advisability of leaving the stockade and joining Marshall on the hilltop, though he recognized that the attempt would be attended by considerable danger and possible loss of life.

They were seated at the table in the captain's office, Gillie haggard and depressed, Carroll with something of the old happy light in his eyes (he was thinking of the midnight message), Somers, as ever, somber and silent.

"Since you wish my opinion, captain," Carroll was saying, "I am certainly in favor of an

immediate retreat to the hilltop. One determined rush, and it can be done."

As Gillie looked at Somers inquiringly the walls of the room creaked, the floor shook, and a low, dull reverberation as of a distant cannonade boomed under their feet.

"An earthquake," observed Gillie.

Carroll was staring in amazement at Somers. The second lieutenant was ghastly pale, his eyes wide open in horror, his face distorted in the most abject fear. With both hands he clung to the edge of the table, as though to save himself from falling.

Again the room creaked and the ground beneath them quivered. Somers, trembling in every limb, laid his head on his crossed arms and moaned piteously. Carroll stared at him in uncomprehending wonder.

As if with an effort, the second lieutenant lifted his head, rose to his feet, and without word or sign, walked unsteadily out of the door.

Carroll met the captain's gaze questioningly. Could it be that Lieutenant Somers was a coward? Carroll had seen men under fire, and facing death in various forms. He knew the physical signs of fear, and if ever terror had been written on a man's countenance it had shown in the face of Somers. What could there be in a "temblor," common enough in southern California, to

bring such a look of ashen dread to the cheeks of a man and a soldier?

But Gillie seemed not greatly surprised. "You must not misunderstand Lieutenant Somers," he said. "He is a brave man, but he has been through one terrible earthquake. It always affects him so. I noticed it first when we had those two slight quakes a month ago. It is often the case, they say, with many who have seen an earthquake in all its horror. It means nothing, and will pass in a few minutes."

Somers reëntered the room, his face still somewhat pale but composed.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said, in his usual calm tones, as he resumed his seat at the table. "We were discussing the question of a retreat up the hill. I am heartily in favor of it."

But the captain, who still had hopes of the return of Benito Willard's company, believed that they would arrive during the course of the day. His suggestion that the attempt to reach the hilltop be deferred until night was adopted. But the hopes of Gillie in this respect were to be shattered directly.

"Gee whilikens, hear them yell," remarked a marine at the east gate, during the afternoon. "Wonder if the greasers found another cannon?"

From down the street leading to the river came

the shrill Californian yell, loud and prolonged. At Carroll's orders the men sprang to the walls, their pieces loaded and primed. A large detachment of mounted men was approaching, the Mexican flag fluttering at their head, the ends of their long, upright lances resting in their stirrup straps. Boldly they rode up the street, and turning, passed, as if in review, before the stockade gate. Carroll, who had been watching them with a puzzled frown on his face, for their manner was anything but hostile, suddenly called out:

"Ground arms, men! Do not fire! My God! they have captured Willard and his men!"

Surrounded by a double line of horsemen, rode the twenty captured members of the militia company. Matt Harbin, his left arm in a sling, and Benito Willard, a blood-stained rag around his head, glanced up at the row of anxious faces above the wall, with an embarrassed air. As Willard caught sight of the flag waving above the stockade his dejected face brightened; he threw up his arm in an appealing gesture, then gravely saluted the colors.

At the head of the column, on a gayly caparisoned horse, rode Servolo Palera, his head erect, his bearing glad and triumphant. But even as he looked up into the faces of the Americans he smiled, a smile in which there was none of the

dark maliciousness that set some of his men jeering viciously at the riflemen.

"Your turn is yet to come, señores," cried one, with mock politeness.

"We shall invite you soon to join your friends," shouted another Californian—remarks which Carroll translated for the Americans who could not understand Spanish.

It was Flores who had ordered the bold and spectacular parade past the stockade, knowing full well that the garrison would not fire, as there would be grave danger of wounding the prisoners, and hoping that the moral effect of the capture would bring about a surrender.

The commandant was a Mexican, not a Californian, and his knowledge of Americans was slight indeed. They were as much without fear as they were without malice. To the men in the stockade, confident of the ultimate triumph of the United States, the struggle was nothing more than a game, a modification of the game that they had been playing for years, with other antagonists,— hunger, cold, thirst, and savage Indians. If by some strange turn of events peace had come instantly, they would have been willing to share their last crust, and their last coin, if it were needed, with their former enemies. But while the game lasted they were playing it good-humoredly, but with all the intensity and

pertinacity of the Anglo-Saxon, and they would play it to the end as long as a shred of hope remained. The cavalcade disappeared in silence toward the Californian headquarters.

Quickly the preparations for leaving the stockade went on, during the afternoon. The ammunition and provisions were gathered into compact bundles and cinched on the backs of the horses. The remaining gun, though still unspiked, was taken from its rude carriage and lashed to the crosstrees of a pack saddle.

Carroll, glancing curiously at Lieutenant Somers, who stood close to him watching the scene of bustling activity, noted the deepened melancholy of the man's face. Intuitively he felt that he was in the presence of a sorrow such as few men ever know, and his sympathetic heart went out to his sad-faced comrade. With this thought in his mind he said quietly:

"That quake seemed to startle you, lieutenant."

"Yes."

Though neither rude nor resentful, there was yet that in the single spoken word that made further reference to the occurrence impossible.

At midnight Carroll reported to the captain that everything was ready for the sortie. Instructions were given to ride down the street silently, and in case of attack to rush to the foot of the ascent and climb the hill as rapidly as possible.

The horses loaded with the supplies were placed in the center, under charge of Somers; Gillie himself took charge of the van, while Carroll brought up the rear.

Over the yellow sand of the street, the glaring white of the adobe walls, and the inky shadows there brooded a heavy and oppressive silence as the creaking gates swung open. The column of horsemen, marching out six abreast, turned slowly into the moonlit street, and walked quietly past the dark verandas toward the foot of the slope. Not a sound could be heard but the soft putter of hoofs in the sand, the creak of saddles, and the excited breathing of the men. Already the heavily loaded horses in the center of the group had reached the slope, and were climbing upward, the stones trickling from their scrambling feet down into the roadway. It seemed as though the short journey was to be made without interruption.

But suddenly guns bellowed up and down the street, bullets hissed above their heads, and a wild whirl of mounted men was upon them.

"Go on, boys!" shouted Carroll. "We will hold them." With three mounted frontiersmen on either side, he turned to meet the charge. Suddenly his horse, a lance point in its throat, reared and screamed in agony, and Carroll fired his pistol at the mounted man before him. Then his horse went down, and he scrambled to his feet,

saber in hand, to find himself staring up into the eyes of Don José Antonio.

"Surrender, Señor Carroll," said Arillo as their swords crossed. "I would not willingly harm you."

So kind, so gentle, so just was the voice, that for a moment Carroll was disarmed of hostile thought.

Then a million bright stars flashed before him; the huddled press of struggling men and plunging horses faded into darkness. A strange sound like the song of a distant river hummed in his ears, and he felt himself sinking, falling, through endless realms of black midnight space.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FAITH OF SERVOLO PALERA

A BIRD was singing in the tree overhead. Carroll opened his eyes, and stared at the gently swaying leaves above him. Somewhere close at hand was the sound of voices and the lisp of moving water. Gray were the ridges with the passing of early dawn, as a creeping radiance whitened the eastern sky. From where he lay, his head pillowed on a folded serape, he could see a line of men sprawling along the river bank, and farther away several mounted Californians under the white limbs of a crooked sycamore. He raised his head, but a sharp stab of pain shot through his shoulders, a deadly nausea gripped him, and he sank back with a moan.

"Feeling better, lieutenant?"

He raised his pain-wrenched eyelids to look into the face of Benito Willard.

"Here, take a sip of this." Willard passed his arm about Carroll's shoulders, and, raising him to a sitting position, pressed a flask of wine to his lips.

"What happened?" inquired Carroll, groping in his memory for the events of the night. "Did they get up?"

"Yes, they got up all right; but they lost most of their provisions. Flores thinks they will have to surrender soon. Jiminy, but that was a wallop you got! Let me look at that head."

Carroll raised his hand to his brow and touched a mass of blood-clotted hair. His head was still throbbing furiously, but the nausea was gone, and with the red wine flooding his veins he felt a quick accession of returning strength.

From the adobe to the left came Indian women, bearing baskets filled with food for the prisoners. Fires had already been lighted, and the appetizing odor of boiling coffee floated on the morning air.

"How did they get you, captain?" asked Carroll.

"Caught us at the Chino Rancho. When we got to my ranch and found that it was all moonshine about Castro being in the Cucamonga Cañon—he had sure enough gone to Sonora—we decided to go to the mountains and hunt bear for a while. Then one day along comes John Rowland and Dave Alexander from the pueblo, with the news that there was the very devil to pay. Consarn that blame fool Gillie! It's all his fault.

"Well," he continued, "we all marched to Chino, hoping to get a new supply of powder there, for we had used nearly all of ours on the bears. In the morning Servolo Palera and his men had surrounded us, and pretty soon they made a

charge on the adobes where we were. We gave them a volley—knocked one young fellow—Ballestos was his name—out of his saddle, dead as a door nail. Too blamed bad, too; he was a nice young chap. That's his twin brother over there on the big bay horse by the sycamore. Pretty soon I saw it was no use. Our powder was all but gone, and they had set fire to the roof; so it was either burn or give up. So when Servolo Palera came to the door and gave me his word that we would not be harmed, but would be treated as prisoners of war, we came out and gave up our guns. Don Servolo's all right; he'll keep his word. Damn Gillie, anyway; he's a fool. I'll bet Flores has robbed my store in the city by this time."

Willard helped himself liberally to the *frijoles* that one of the Indian women placed before him, and then added, "I wish the darn fuss was over. It can have but one end, anyway. Why, there's my wife!" he cried, as he sprang to his feet.

Two women were hurrying out of the peach orchard toward the river, and Willard and Harbin stepped forward to meet them. In their arms they carried bundles of clothing for their husbands. Though their dark faces were troubled, they bore up, with a brave attempt at carelessness.

Carroll was listening idly to the badly accented Spanish of the two Americans as they assured

their wives that there was no danger, and they would doubtless be released on parole in a few days, when a footfall behind him caused him to start. Painfully he turned his head, and looked into the eyes of Loreto Arillo.

For a moment the girl gazed at him in dumb agony, at his unshorn and haggard face, his soiled and bedraggled uniform, the streak of clotted blood on his brow.

"José told me, but now," she panted, "and I came. Mother does not know. Oh, Juan, Juan," she moaned, "they have hurt thee."

The lieutenant had risen shakily to his feet, tumultuous gladness surging through his soul. Ignoring all conventionalities, defying every tradition of her race and her training, obedient only to the call of her heart, she had come to him. He forgot the war, forgot his wound, forgot everything save the joy that flooded his soul at this conclusive evidence of her constancy. In trance-like ecstasy he threw his arms about her, and drew her to him, murmuring, "You came to me! You came—to me!"

For the first time his lips met hers in a long, passionate pressure. Then her head sank on his shoulder.

"Ah, Juan, Juan, I fear it can never be," she sobbed. "Father himself has said so."

For only this morning, Don José Antonio,

returning from the deathbed of one of his dearest friends, shot down during the skirmish at the foot of the hill, had said, sadly but firmly, in answer to the unspoken question in her eyes, "No, child, no; it must not be. Set thy mind to forget him; there is now too much blood between our peoples."

The Don knew nothing of Carroll's capture. Engaged in the effort to save his wounded friend, he had lost sight of Carroll in the mêlée. The attacking party, broken in two by a volley and a counter-charge from the Americans, and satisfied with their capture of several of the provision-laden horses, had galloped away—Arillo and his men northward toward the plaza, while the remainder, bearing with them the unconscious form of Carroll, had ridden down the street in the opposite direction. Vanuela had ordered Carroll placed with the other prisoners, and had not seen fit to notify Arillo of his capture.

Bitter, too, was the feeling among the Californians at Gillie's stubborn resistance, a resistance that, under the circumstances, they could neither understand nor appreciate. To them it seemed but stupid obstinacy, and a reckless disregard for human life. Equally bitter was the animosity toward Willard and his men for having taken up arms against the land that, for many years, had given them a home and a welcome. The

Californians were resolved that if the revolution was triumphant never again would an American be allowed to reside in the country. Arillo himself realized the justice of the decision, but he was also aware that if, on the other hand, the Americans were victorious they would possibly deal harshly with the men who had broken their paroles. Reluctantly, he had been driven to the conclusion that, in any event, there was but grief and bitterness in store for his daughter, and that it was his plain duty to withdraw his consent to the engagement.

At the girl's unexpected words, at the sight of her face dark with sorrow, Carroll's heart sank within him. Again his head throbbed, and the sickening nausea swept over him.

"Loreto, Loreto," he moaned, "I cannot, I will not give thee up. Is there no hope?"

"I love thee, Juan. Come what may, I shall always love thee, I can never love another. But everything and every one is against us." She wrung her hands miserably, while the tears streamed down her face.

Carroll, racked with mental and physical agony, was reeling slightly, but he held himself erect with a mighty effort.

"But, Loreto—after the war is over—I will come —"

"No, no, Jack." There was utter hopelessness

in her voice. "No more will Americans be allowed in the land. But, if thou canst come, I will go with thee, anywhere."

A sharp command from the horsemen under the trees, and Willard and Harbin released themselves from the arms of their wives. Loreto stood for a moment, sobbing silently, then she threw her arms around Carroll's neck and kissed him frantically.

"Farewell, Juan, my love. Farewell—perhaps for the last time. God bless and protect thee. We may never meet again."

"We shall," protested Carroll with pale lips, lips on which there was something akin to a grim smile. "Fear not, dearest, I will come, I will come for thee."

Little he dreamed in what guise he would come again to Loreto Arillo.

As she turned away, Señora Willard took the heart-broken girl in her arms, and the tears of the women mingled. Carroll stood speechless. Around him the trees, the hills, the sky were whirling wildly.

As the prisoners, shepherded by the grim-faced horsemen, waded the shallow stream, the lieutenant paused to look back at the motionless figures of the three grieving women. Ballestos, who was riding close to him, brought his long lance down heavily across the lieutenant's shoulders and snapped:

"Keep in line there, and face to the front."

Carroll was still weak and shaky, and the stiff blow set his neck muscles aching in agony. Harbin, close to him, muttered a curse; then, noting his uncertain steps and paling face, he took his arm.

MacNamara, riding at the rear of the line, had seen the blow, but gave no sign. His dark face was heavy with troubled thought, and his fingers groped in the depths of his beard. There was cause for his uneasiness. Though on the surface, enthusiasm ran high, the secret agent had good reason for suspecting that many of the older men, better informed than the rank and file of the immense military strength of the United States, were at heart doubtful of the success of the revolt. He was beginning to suspect that they saw in it but a means to force from the Americans honorable terms of capitulation, if an overwhelming force should come upon them out of the east.

Though Flores and most of the army were earnest and enthusiastic, he sensed great danger in the lack of enthusiasm noticeable in Arillo, Alvaro, Garfias, and Cota. True, they were all taking an active and efficient part in the present military operations, and would be willing to fight against the invaders when they appeared, but he suspected it would be only for the purpose

of salving their injured dignity, and forcing forgiveness for the broken paroles, and not with any hope of ultimate victory.

Eugene MacNamara was a man of one idea—the glory and prestige of the British Empire. His command of Castilian was such that none in the pueblo dreamed he was aught but the Spaniard he claimed to be, while his military bearing confirmed the rumor that he had seen service in the old land. His Irish name was but an accidental legacy from some forgotten ancestor, who had bequeathed to him naught else but a certain quickness of thought and keenness of perception. Apart from these Celtic attributes, the man was English in heart and soul. Something, he was thinking, would have to be done to make the chasm between the *gente de razon* and the Americans so impassable that no reconciliation would be possible. Now was the time, while the tide of anger was flooding high in the hearts of the Californians.

It was at this moment that the heavy lance of Ballestos fell across the shoulders of Carroll, and the Englishman noted the Californian's fiery eye and heard his muttered oath.

His countenance settled into an expression of grim hardness; he urged his horse forward, until he rode side by side with Ballestos. Leaning in his saddle, he whispered long and earnestly.

The line of prisoners trailed snake-like over the long brown rise beyond the river. As they swung to the south, through a hollow, Willard, who had been glancing back suspiciously at the two, heard MacNamara's cold voice: "Once done, Ballestos, it would soon be forgotten and forgiven."

The Californian, a baleful light in his face, nodded, and smiled a cruel little smile that showed his sharp white teeth.

"Halt!"

MacNamara walked his horse over to the guards, and gave some whispered orders. They slipped from their steeds, and carefully primed their escopetas.

"My God," gasped Willard, whose quick eye had noted the preparations, "they are going to shoot us!"

"You will have just ten minutes to pray and to write any messages you may wish to send your friends; I promise you that they shall be delivered. And then—the execution will take place. "MacNamara drew a notebook from his clothes, tore out a handful of leaves, and handed them to one of the guards, who distributed them to the horror-striken men.

"You bloodthirsty dogs," roared Harbin, "you will all swing for this when Stockton comes back!"

Carroll knew warfare. He had seen its horrors in Cuba. He knew that the anger and resentment

following a day's engagement often led to indiscretions, regretted on the morrow. He understood the revenge of Ballestos. Though all California might repudiate the slaughter after it was over, nothing would then alter the grim fact.

Men look death in the face with varying demeanors. He noted almost idly that one man, whose hardihood and bravery he knew full well, had collapsed with mental and physical fear. Another great, overgrown boy was protesting with theatrical fervor that he "would die like a man." Of one thing he was sure; he would not die without some effort to forestall the end. Life, in spite of its vicissitudes, was still very sweet. He looked at the line of doomed men, most of whom were dumb with horror. They stood silent, some idly folding the papers, some writing in feverish haste.

The fixed features of MacNamara, he observed, were intently bent on him; for the Englishman was a judge of men, and he feared that Carroll would be the one to prevent the execution, if such a thing were at all possible.

When Carroll's note was written the secret agent reached for it, but Ballestos intercepted it.

"Pardon me, Señor Almagro," he said haughtily, "this note is addressed to me."

MacNamara frowned; then smiled.

Ballestos paled when he read it, and held it clenched, while his eyes went to the ground. MacNamara was anxious and impatient.

"We waste time," he complained. "Give the command."

But Ballestos, ever a vacillating man, was perplexed and alarmed. Vengeful though he was, he was in a sense just. The Americans had taken his brother's life; they must give theirs in return. But here was one feature he had failed to realize, for Carroll's note read:

"If you murder me without giving me the services of a priest, my soul will haunt you through life until death, and thereafter will pursue you throughout the borders of hell. In the name of our common faith, I demand a priest."

Ballestos was astounded to find the American officer a Catholic. Aside from that, his superstitious soul thrilled with fear at the thought that the man, though dead, might fulfill his terrible threat. Glancing toward Carroll, he noted that the lieutenant had sunk to his knees, and was crossing himself.

Without a word, he handed the note to MacNamara.

"Stuff!" declared MacNamara. "Let the execution proceed."

But Ballestos objected. He asked if there was not some way to comply with the American's

request? Priests were plentiful, but there were none to be had at the present moment. Perhaps, in twenty minutes, one could be brought from the main command, farther down the river. It would be better; the men must die, but it would be quite as effective to hold off the execution for half an hour; Carroll's request was surely within his rights.

So he reasoned while MacNamara fumed. Moments slipped away. Carroll watched the parley, grimly determined that, while he would line up ostensibly to be shot, he would make a fight for his life. When the men faced the muskets, he determined to drop beneath the bullets' level and, rushing into the firing squad, throw confusion into the executioners. Probably he would be shot or beaten to death, but he would make a fight for it. Already he had accomplished something. Had he not written the note and caused the delay, twenty-six bleeding corpses would now be lying on the ground. He presumed they would not tie his hands. With the little case knife concealed within his shirt, he would stab and stab and stab, until the darkness of death ended everything. He proposed to die like an American and a soldier, and perhaps—perhaps—after all, there was some hope. He might escape. The horses were standing with drooping reins close at hand. A quick dash, and once in a

saddle he would have a fair chance for life and liberty.

Fear came to him only when he thought of Loreto Arillo, for within his heart of hearts he had refused to accept her hopeless view. And now, with the sweet assurance of her constancy still ringing in his ears, the chalice of happiness was to be shattered at his lips. The basest coward never feared death more than he did now, all because of her. Never before in all his existence had his appreciation of the sweets of life been so keen as in the brief period since he had known her love, and suffered the estrangement.

His mind was playing him queer pranks, for, simultaneously with his thoughts of her, he was noting the peculiar quality of leather in a saddle lying on the ground near by. The grotesqueness of it struck him, and he smiled. Now his mind flew backward to the trivial incidents of his boyhood days.

The other men had begun to nerve themselves for the ordeal. Beyond the blue hills, ranged in peaceful symmetry, the arching azure sky gave no sign; the perfume of the flowers proclaimed the sweetness of life. Carroll had passed a locket, containing his mother's daguerrotype, to a Californian, to deliver to Loreto. The note wrapped about it said: "Dying, my heart is thine."

The parley between MacNamara and Ballestos

still continued, the Englishman insistent, scornful, the other troubled and hesitating.

"Your brother went to meet his God unshriven. Will you do more for these, his murderers?" MacNamara sneered.

Ballestos forgot his superstitious fears, his religious scruples. He remembered only his twin brother, shot out of his saddle at Chino by the very men now before him. He ground his teeth, and threw his hand upward in a motion of assent.

The doomed men were ranged in line in front of the Californians, who stood with the butts of their escopetas on the ground, scarce ten feet away. The firing squad gazed curiously at the men about to die. They were impatient, for Carroll's note had caused nearly half an hour's delay. The lieutenant's head was throbbing again, but he rallied his strength to stand erect, noting carefully the man who was to send him to death. His hands were not tied, and he determined to find the rifleman's heart with his knife at the first encounter. After that he would cut right and left, till the daylight vanished.

MacNamara's sharp eye observed him fumbling in his jacket.

"Search that man," he ordered.

Two Californians sprang upon Carroll. As he resisted feebly, the knife dropped to the ground and was picked up by one of the guards.

He felt himself being rudely pushed into line. Though the last hope seemed gone, yet never would he die like a felled ox. He would rush below the level of the bullets' fire, wrench a musket from a Californian, and fight it out.

"Ready!" The guns were lifted from the ground.

"Present!" He looked down a glistening gun barrel.

Carroll's arms were bent, his muscles taut, his fists clenched; his bloodshot eyes watching the bearded face of MacNamara, he awaited the signal word. He was crouching for a low spring at the man before him, when again the weakening nausea swept over him. In spite of himself, his muscles relaxed and his eyes closed; again the universe rocked about him.

A rush of hoofs, a dark mass between him and the sky, a clatter of steel on gun barrels, and the lieutenant half opened his eyes to see Servolo Palera, sword in hand, striking down the escopetas, his face white with rage, his quivering lips gasping execrations.

"Down with your guns!" he roared. "By the God who made me, I will run my sword through the first man who dares to disobey! I gave my word at Chino," he added, breathless in his indignation. "I, Servolo Palera, gave my word, as a man and a Christian, that these men should

not be injured. And not one hair of their heads shall be harmed while a drop of blood flows in my veins."

Swinging his horse about to face MacNamara and Ballestos, "Sangre de Cristo!" he panted. "You son of the devil, Almagro, you would have done murder, and you, Ballestos, when I heard you were in charge of the prisoners, I feared the worst—you two are no Christian gentlemen, but heathen Goths. I saw the signs of your deviltry from yonder hill; had my horse not been a fleet one, these men would now be dead."

The men stood silent, awed by the nearness of the death they had escaped. Willard alone was grinning maliciously.

"You wait, you little skunk," he sneered at Ballestos, "I'll get you for this somehow, somewhere. See if I don't."

For Carroll the strain had been too great. With all the strength of which his pain-racked body was capable, he had keyed himself to meet death fighting. Then had come the shock of utter relief. As the landscape faded from his sight, he swayed, tottered, and fell forward on his face.

Palera, at the sound, swung his horse around, and stared down curiously at the unconscious figure on the ground.

"Who is he?" he inquired, as he noted his uniform.

"Lieutenant Carroll of Gillie's command, captured at the hill last night," responded Willard.

"Ah!" There was a strange note of interest and sympathy in Servolo's voice, that caused Willard to glance at him curiously.

By the orders of Palera, a litter was made from some saplings growing in the hollow, and the prisoners only too gladly carried the unconscious man over the hills to the south.

MacNamara and Ballestos, who at the command of Servolo had given up their swords, were sent under arrest to report to Commandant Flores at headquarters, beyond the Paredon Bluff.

As the silent procession wound through the hollows to the south, Palera, riding always beside the litter, gazed down at Carroll's white face.

"Thou," he mused, "art the man who hast blighted my life, yet for thee I would die, if need be—that the eyes of Loreto Arillo might know no tears. Ah, could I but exchange places with thee, even as thou art—sick, wounded, a prisoner in thine enemies' hands. Would that I were thou! Would that I were thou!"



CHAPTER XIX

THE SNARL OF THE WOLF

TO an adobe in the deep gulch behind the Paredon Bluff, Palera led the prisoners. Hardly had they arrived when a messenger, riding hurriedly, summoned Servolo to headquarters. In spite of the pleading protests of the Americans, he obeyed the order, assuring them that they had nothing further to fear, and that he would return as soon as possible. Bereft of his protecting presence, the fear of the prisoners grew. Would his influence prevail against that of Almagro (as the Englishman was known to the Californians) and the vengeful Ballestos, or would a few hours later see the attempt of the morning carried to a bloody conclusion? There was not a man but dreaded what the day might bring forth. Many of them were already planning resistance.

The building was bare of comforts; there were neither beds nor blankets; the wounds of the injured had not been dressed since their arrival from Chino, two days before. Carroll lay on the naked earthen floor, breathing heavily; the kindly attempts of Willard and Harbin to revive him had proved ineffectual. As the sun climbed noon-high, there was no sign of preparation for the midday meal.

Suddenly the door was darkened by the black-robed figure of a priest. As he entered, he drew his crucifix from his sash, and held it up meaningly.

"Do any of you wish to confess?" he inquired.

In the tense silence that followed his words, the faces of the prisoners paled. His question seemed to bear horrible significance.

"Mon Dieu," groaned a Frenchman, Roubidoux by name, "de end come quick now,—dey goin' to shoot us. A sure, sure sign is the coming of the father."

"No, no," protested Padre Estenaga, "my coming here has nothing to do with the intention of the government in regard to you. I heard that some of you were sick and wounded, and thought that my services might be needed."

Catching sight of Carroll's recumbent figure, he hurried over to him, followed by Willard, who explained in a low tone: "Lieutenant Carroll of Gillie's command. He's in a bad way—crack on the head. We had to carry him from the river."

The priest looked into the face of the unconscious man, noted his flushed cheeks and hoarse breathing, and nodded. Then he ran his eyes slowly around the room, as if counting the number of the prisoners. Without further comment, he hurried out of the room. Through the open door they caught a glimpse of him spurring his horse madly down the gulch, toward the pueblo.

"He is sure in a big hurry, getting out of here. I am still mooch scare, me," and Roubidoux, still full of gloomy forebodings, regretted that he had not taken advantage of the opportunity to avail himself of the services of the church.

It was well after midday, and all inquiries in regard to food had been met by the disdainful shrugs of the guards. A voice at the door, rich with the full accent of old Spain, caused Harbin to start.

"I guess you are right, Roubidoux," he admitted despairingly. "There's that damned Spaniard again. Hear the old-country twang? Palera has been overruled at headquarters. Prepare for the worst, boys. Rush the guards as they enter the door, and try to get their guns. We'll die fighting, anyway."

But Harbin was mistaken. It was Don Eulogio de Celis, a Spaniard, a long resident in the pueblo, who entered the room, accompanied by Arillo and an English doctor, named Richard Den. The latter hurried at once toward Carroll, and busied himself administering restoratives.

Don José Antonio stood silent, his fine face red with sudden anger as his full gaze took in the bare room, the naked earthen floor, the anxiety on the faces of the captives. Turning quickly to the door, he shouted a sharp command, and a dozen servants led by Mariano entered, bearing

clothing, blankets, and baskets of food for the prisoners.

Carroll opened his eyes to gaze into the anxious face of Arillo. "My dear friend," the Don explained, "I heard but now from Padre Estenaga of your capture, and the condition of the prisoners. I could not have known sooner, being absent till an hour ago at the outpost at Palos Verdes. And that—that of this morning. Holy Mother, it is a shame and a reproach to our land and our people!"

His voice trembled with indignation, and as if to relieve his feelings, he turned quickly to the guards, who had clustered inquisitively about the open door, and poured forth in contemptuous Castilian a withering excoriation that caused the armed men to slink away. Then, as if half ashamed of his outburst, he added, with an embarrassed smile, as he noted the hungry men busy over the baskets of food, "Por Dios, these fellows must all chew tobacco. Hurry, Mariano, to the pueblo, and bring a big box. Bring also pipes."

As his hand grasped Carroll's in parting, the lieutenant held it fast, and his lips uttered the one questioning word, "Loreto?"

For a moment the face of Don José Antonio was the scene of conflicting emotions. Fear for the future of his daughter, and regard for

the man whose pain-laden eyes looked up at him beseechingly, battled within his soul.

"The good God be merciful to us all, Señor Carroll," he sighed. "We are being carried on by a tide that cannot be controlled. Whither, neither thou nor I may know. What I might say avails but little. It is not for me to decide, but for the good God, who they say is also the God of battles. We are all in His hands. Think of it not at all. Rest and sleep. Doctor Den shall come to you each day till you are recovered. I shall tell my daughter that you are now in no danger," he added, with a forced reserve, "and that you inquired for her." Formal as his words seemed, they implied much.

He turned to Willard. "My dear Don Benito, let your mind and the minds of your men be at ease. Not only are you safe, but you will receive henceforth the usage that all civilized nations accord to prisoners of war."

Arillo spoke truly. Thereafter the prisoners had no cause to complain of their treatment. MacNamara and Ballestos were both prisoners in the carcel, by the order of Flores. The commandant, though ambitious and vainglorious, had many of the fine ideals of the Spanish gentleman. Only MacNamara's ingenious defense had saved him from suspicion. Exonerating Ballestos, the secret agent boldly assumed all

responsibility for the affair. He pointed out that the men were for the most part naturalized Mexicans, captured with arms in their hands, fighting against a land that had given them a home, and that he, during his military service in Europe, had seen men shot for less. Moreover, he claimed that he had taken a hasty response of Flores, "Dispose of them as you see fit," to mean that he was to use his own judgment in the matter of life and death.

"Fool," roared Flores in a towering passion, "I thought you were asking where the prisoners should be quartered."

"Take them both away." The commandant waved his hand disgustedly toward Ballestos and the Englishman. "Keep them in close confinement until further orders."

But of this the prisoners knew nothing. As the days dragged on, they could glean but little news from the close-mouthed guards as to the condition of affairs in the pueblo. Gillie, they knew, still held the hill, for they could hear occasionally the desultory booming of the escopetas, and the answering crack of the rifles.

Commandant Flores himself, accompanied by Hugo Vanuela, trotted into the hollow one afternoon. Taking Benito Willard aside, he addressed him in a mandatory tone.

"Do thou, Don Benito, write to that fool on

the hill yonder a letter advising him to surrender. On my honor as a Christian and a gentleman, I desire to avoid further bloodshed. But since the skirmish at the foot of the hill a few nights ago, many of my men have been drinking, and vowing that they will attack him whether I will or no. It is impossible for the man to hold out. He has no supplies, nor any means of getting any. He can expect no assistance for months. We wish the pueblo to be rid of his accursed presence. Write this as coming from thyself, Don Benito. You know I am speaking the truth."

Willard nodded. "I reckon you're right, commandant. Gillie can't do good here, cooped up on that hill. There is no reason for him to be as important as George Washington," he commented dryly, as he hastily scribbled the note and handed it to Flores.

Lieutenant Carroll, seated on the grass, his bandaged head resting against an oak, looked up to find himself gazing into the bronzed face of Vanuela. Hugo's eyes were full of insolent merriment as he stared down at the reclining man.

"So-o," he sneered, "can it be the Señor Carroll, the protector of the helpless, the friend of the oppressed? No doubt you found my pistol-butt somewhat hard, but such is the fortune of war. Is there any message you would wish to send to your friends in the pueblo?"

Carroll glared at him, his face set in an expression of utter disgust, but he made no reply.

"Perchance," went on Vanuela, "it would be more explicit to say 'friend' instead of 'friends.' There might be a message to a fair lady—a love note, eh! I would be honored to so serve you."

At the man's deliberate, taunting words, replete with malicious triumph, the face of the lieutenant paled with indignation. He would have liked to drag the smiling villain from his horse and choke the grin from his face, but he lay before his tormentor, weak, unarmed, and a prisoner. Restraining his rage, he rose slowly to his feet. Then coolly, deliberately, his words like a sword thrust, he replied.

"The *gente de razon*, Vanuela, choose their company carefully. There is not a woman of Spanish blood in the pueblo who would receive a note from the hands of Hugo Vanuela, except it be a woman of easy virtue. Thank you for your kind offer," he sneered back, "but no missive of mine would I entrust to a double-faced traitor to his native land."

It was not the cool cutting tone of the lieutenant, not the angry flash in his dark blue eye, not the scorn in his face that hurt; it was the stinging truth in his words that pierced beneath the Indian-like impassiveness of Hugo Vanuela and for the moment cut his very soul. For once in

his life his self-possession vanished. He ground his teeth in a paroxysm of rage, and his face twisted into an expression almost demoniacal. With bitter hate, he hissed out a foul epithet, and cantered away after Commandant Flores.

"What news from the pueblo?" asked Carroll when, a few hours later, Servolo Palera rode up and dismounted at the door of the prisoners' quarters.

"Glorious news—pardon me—I mean welcome news for us. Captain Gillie will evacuate the city."

The prisoners came rushing to the door, full of eager questions and glad words of welcome for Servolo.

"Yes," went on Palera; "Captain Gillie has hearkened to the advice of Don Benito Willard. The terms of Commandant Flores were generous. The Americans are to be allowed to march peaceably to the beach at San Pedro, where Señor Gillie has promised us he will surrender his horses and cannon. He also agrees, on his word of honor, to embark on the first ship that comes to port. Even now is he marching out. Do you wish to go to the top of the hill? You can then see them as they pass down the river road. The guards will accompany you."

Gladly the prisoners availed themselves of the privilege. In the clear California air they could

see the long line of horsemen scrambling down the hillside, then lost to view as they rode through the streets of the pueblo. The last of the houses passed, the Americans wound into the open road by the riverside; the fife and drum struck up a lilting air, and the stars and stripes were proudly unfurled as if in defiance of the body of Californian horse a few yards behind. Faintly across the wide gulf of the river bed the sound of prolonged cheering came to the prisoners on the ridge. Slowly the starry flag fluttered down from the flagstaff on the hill, and, following another outburst of cheers, the Mexican tricolor took its place.

Servolo, standing by Carroll, threw his hat in the air, with a glad triumphant cheer, and then turned to the silent prisoners with his sweet smile.

"You will pardon me, señores; but truly we have great reason to rejoice."

"That is all right, my boy," said Carroll, laying his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder. "Cheer while yet you may, because there will surely come a time when you cannot."

During the weary, monotonous weeks that followed, little news of Loreto reached Carroll, though more than once señoras Willard and Harbin came to the camp with comforts for their husbands. Always they greeted Carroll kindly, their dark eyes soft with secret sympathy.

"Ah, Señor Carroll," Señora Willard whispered, "the Señora Arillo—she is terribly angry. She has discovered what happened the morning Loreto came with us to the river shore. I have tried in vain to reach Loreto, but the señora—she is clever; she trusts me not. When I go to the Arillo home, always is Loreto hidden. José and Manuel are with the soldiers; Delfina and Mariano would not dare disobey the señora. Foolish woman that she is," she added, as she cast a loving look at her husband, "she does not know what good husbands Americans are."

"Something is up, lieutenant," commented Don Benito, after one of these visits. "Don't be surprised if you hear cannonading at any time. Don José Antonio, the cannon, and the gun crew left the pueblo an hour ago, going in the direction of San Pedro. Lordy! Lordy! but I hope it is Stockton. He'll sure make short work of this silly fuss."

CHAPTER XX

AN UNKNOWN FRIEND

ONE night, as Carroll was drifting off to sleep, the mutter of voices at the door awoke him, and he sat up with a start. A young officer whose face and figure were unknown to him, followed by three barefooted Indian soldiers, entered the room, and asked in a low tone, as though wishing to avoid waking the other sleepers:

"Lieutenant Carroll?"

"Here," he responded wonderingly.

"You are to accompany me at once."

Carroll's heart jumped with joy. "Of course, I am to be exchanged," he ventured, as he reached for his shoes.

"No," answered the officer shortly.

The lieutenant stopped, one shoe still in his hand, and stared at the Californian, who murmured, "Make haste; time presses."

Strangely puzzled, he followed the officer and his ragged escort up the tree-embowered hollow, his mind ever grappling with the problem. Why this separation from the other prisoners? Where were they taking him? Well, he would not die without a struggle.

With his eyes he measured the slight figure of

the Californian striding ahead of him. In a hand-to-hand conflict he believed he could master him, secure his sword, run him through, and then, blade in hand, fight on till he had routed the Indians, or a bullet from an escopeta brought the end. Carroll had fully recovered from the effects of the blow on the head, and he felt his muscles harden and his heart beat faster as he pictured the possible struggle soon to come. As they came to an open spot in the vale, he edged close to the officer, his eye on the sword hilt.

"Where are you taking me?" he demanded, as he came to a halt.

"Have no fear, señor; no harm is intended you," said the Californian, as he smiled reassuringly. Carroll knew intuitively that as far as the man himself was concerned, he spoke the truth.

They passed the last of the scrub oaks, and as they climbed the slope a lone adobe loomed up before them, gleaming ghostly white in the moonlight.

"My orders were to conduct you here, where you will remain. Rations will be brought you from day to day."

"By whose orders?"

"Carajo! But you ask many questions. I do not inquire about orders; I obey them. I served three years in the Mexican army."

He threw up his head with a gesture of pride.

After all, Carroll, though an officer, was but a prisoner.

The door was thrown open, the blankets carried within, and the Californian bade him a courteous farewell.

"I wish you a pleasant night, señor," he said, half repentantly.

Carroll sat long at the door in thoughtful silence, while the guards lounged a few feet away, chatting and smoking as if unconscious of his presence. Neither the Spaniard Almagro nor Ballestos could be responsible for his present situation, for the lieutenant had heard through Palera of the action of Flores. The thought of Hugo Vanuela flashed upon his mind. Could it be that he had separated him from the other prisoners in order to murder him without interference from them? Why the officer's reticence in regard to the source of his orders? Why the selection of this deserted, unvisited hovel? He had heard of Vanuela's company of Indians. Could these men be from his command?

"Would the señor be so kind as to oblige us with some tobacco?"

Carroll looked up searchingly into the man's face, but he could discern there no sinister signs of treachery, nothing but harmless, amiable stupidity.

"Much thanks; the señor is very kind," said

the barefooted man, as he took the piece of twisted sailor's tobacco. "Ah—American tobacco. I have never used any of it. They say it is very good. It will be a treat. A thousand thanks, señor."

Amid so much treachery, Carroll's heart went out to the simple, guileless fellow.

"Give all the boys some," he said, as he handed over the entire roll.

Still puzzled, and dreading the worst, for there was the greater part of the night yet before him, the lieutenant wrapped himself in a blanket on the floor, well out of range of the open doorway. He laid beside him, within easy reach of his hand, a stout oaken cudgel he had found on the floor.

In spite of his watchfulness, he was drifting off to sleep when a piercing scream of terror caused him to spring to his feet. Grasping his club, and rushing to the door, he was in time to see two of the guards in wild flight down the hill, while the other had dropped his gun and stood transfixed by fright, his arms extended, his palms outspread as if to ward off some invisible horror.

"Jesus Maria! God in Heaven!" gurgled the man. "The Black Matador! The Black Matador!" Then, recovering the control of his limbs, with a shriek of fear he disappeared down the ravine.

Amazed, the American turned in the direction of the man's gaze.

From behind the corner of the hut came a mounted man, his horse's feet falling noiselessly on the dry ground. In spite of himself, the lieutenant thrilled with a momentary superstitious fear. It was indeed the Black Matador, as Loreto had described him. He wore the small round hat, knobbed at the sides, the short, wide cloak. Somber, spectral, silent, his face was hidden by a cloth as black as his raiment—black as the jet-black steed he bestrode.

With beating heart, Carroll clutched his cudgel, and waited. The strange visitor turned his horse and waved his arm with a beckoning motion. Carroll hesitated, his mind a wild flurry of hope, surprise, and distrust. Who was the creature? What meant this fantastic masquerade? Was he friend or foe? Yet the rider was alone, and was now holding out both hands to show that he was unarmed.

With the reckless impetuosity of youth, Carroll followed him over the rise, down into another hollow, toward a black smudge of thick shrubbery. As they approached, a tethered horse raised his head from the grass, and his inquiring whinny cut into the silent night. Slowly the other rode to the horse's head, unfastened the rope from the bridle, then, swinging his steed about, he motioned to the empty saddle.

"In God's name," cried Carroll, "speak!"

Suddenly across his mind there flashed remembrance of the night he had met Marshall in his strange masquerade near the old bull ring. In the set of the black-swathed shoulders he believed he recognized the familiar figure of the frontiersman. His heart lifted in great relief, and he almost laughed aloud at the sheer audacity of the scheme.

"Marshall—Jim," he cried, "drop this masquerade! I recognize you."

A hoarse sound, sepulchral enough, neither a chuckle nor a sob, came from the horseman. The faceless head shook with a negative motion. With his upraised arm, the black figure described a wide circle to the east, and finally held it firmly, pointing in the direction of San Pedro, his fingers vibrating meaningly. The American easily grasped his meaning. He was to make a wide detour to avoid the Californian pickets, and then ride south to San Pedro and the beach, where he would find Gillie and his men.

"I understand you, Jim," he said, as he sprang to the saddle.

Without warning, the stranger brought his quirt down on the haunches of Carroll's horse, and it leaped forward in affright. For a moment the lieutenant struggled with the frenzied beast, then, as he recovered control, he glanced back at the other.

The drooping shoulders were heaving quietly, while muffled sounds, as of hard-drawn breathing, came from beneath the cloth-covered face. Wondering at the frontiersman's reticence, now that the purpose of the ghostly masquerade was accomplished, he called again, surprise in his tones.

"Do you not ride with me, Jim?"

Again the negative shake of the black head. Carroll was tempted to laugh aloud. True, he had forgotten that the Black Matador must ride alone. It would indeed be out of keeping for him to ride "cheek by jowl" with a living man. There were Californian pickets to terrify before Marshall could win back to the beach. To ride together would indeed spoil the effect of the apparition. Again Carroll laughed to himself.

Yet he was not satisfied as to his deliverer's identity. It was unlike Marshall to be silent, for Marshall was a man who scorned deception. What was the mystery behind it all? The very hoofbeats of his steed were unnatural in sound. He walked his mount and, leaning in the saddle, discovered that its hoofs were wrapped in padded cloth.

His heart grew light as the miles fell away behind him, until he remembered that each hoofbeat, while it brought him nearer to friends and safety, took him farther away from the woman he loved.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CANNON OF THE SEÑORA

A CANNON'S roar crashed out on the sensitive morning air, and echoed back from the quiet gray land swells. John Carroll awoke, and rubbed his eyes.

It was chill morning, with the sea-mist still clinging to the land and the sun an impotent disk of scarlet hanging hand high above the horizon. Carroll's gaze brought him no sign of conflict. There was no life on the winding roadway, the rolling plain, nor the mist-robed shrubbery. While he waited, desperately cold and hungry, and aquiver with eagerness to ascertain the cause of the cannon shot, he peered cautiously through the scrub oaks where he had spent the night wrapped in his saddle blanket.

The panorama of the night before began to unroll. One by one he reviewed the incidents of his escape, beginning with the strange march up the hill to the deserted adobe; the mysterious horseman in black; his own hurried ride to the eastward; the challenge, and the shot in the darkness—a shot that had sent his steed to the ground, kicking in agony. Breathless with suspense, from behind a hillock he had watched the Californians gathered around his dying horse.

For miles he had walked aimlessly, for the night had turned cloudy; the sky was starless, and for aught he knew he might be hurrying back toward the pueblo. Around him everywhere were the watchful horsemen, and a hundred times he had narrowly escaped recapture only by lying flat on the ground as they trotted past in the darkness. Worn out by his futile efforts to find a main ravine that led toward the sea, and realizing that if morning dawned while he was without means of concealment his capture was certain, he had crept into a clump of oaks in a hollow and resigned himself to sleep.

In front of him, a few feet away, lay the road, a winding strip of yellow ribboning away to the south, across the unbroken plain now gold and green with blossoming mustard. That he could not be far from the sea, he knew; for in the mist slow-moving over the swells and hollows was the salty tang of the ocean, and the odor of moist seaweed. High above him wheeled the white wide-winged gulls, uttering their short, shrill cries.

Along the winding trail came a mounted Californian, and Carroll drew himself more closely behind the bushes. The rider was followed by a score of others, walking their horses and chatting carelessly. Don José Antonio rode alone, apparently deep in thought; behind him, Servolo, engaged in an animated conversation



with José. In their rear fluttered the Mexican tricolor, borne proudly aloft by Don Francisco Cota. Hugo Vanuela, astride a big bay horse, was glancing upward at the flag, scornful amusement showing in his face. They went by almost within touching distance of the fugitive.

Carroll noted the passing of the brass four-pounder. It was mounted on the front wheels and tongue of a wagon, and drawn by a dozen rawhide riatas attached to the saddle-horns of the Californians. Close beside it rode Manuel, his young face bright with an air of proud proprietorship. For the fame of Señora Arillo's exploit had gone far and wide, and the old field piece had already been dubbed "the Cannon of the Señora."

The group came to a halt. The main body of the command, nearly a hundred mounted men, cantered up, and at a quick order from Arillo scattered over the neighboring swells. The gun was swung around into position, and as quickly loaded and rammed. Vanuela grasped the tongue and lifted it from the ground, while Palera, kneeling between the wheels, sighted it at the oncoming Americans, hidden from Carroll's view.

"Higher, Señor Vanuela," warned Palera; "a little lower now—there now, Manuel, my boy."

Manuel puffed his cigar to a coal, and touched it to the vent. An echoing roar, and the drifting

smoke hid for a moment the group of men and horses. As it cleared away, Carroll could see them bending forward in their saddles, their hands at their brows, eager to note the effect of the shot.

"Curses on that powder," groaned Cota, the standard bearer. "It does nothing but puff. See the ball roll. Try the good powder."

From close at hand came the mocking shouts of the unharmed enemy. With incredible quickness the gun crew leaped to their horses and the band galloped away, the gun straining and leaping wildly at the riata ends. Carroll riskily wormed himself forward to where he could see both up and down the roadway. He could hear the measured tread of many feet; then over the low rise came the Americans, four hundred strong. They were on foot, marching in a hollow square, and Carroll noted with surprise that they were armed with lances as well as with carbines.

The watchful man in the bushes was in a glow of hopeful expectancy; in a few moments the invading force would be opposite him and he could easily rejoin them. He glanced up the trail toward the Californians. As he did so, the gun again belched forth its cloud of smoke.

But this time there were no derisive cheers from the advancing force. He saw a sailor on the corner of the square go down with a yell of



agony. Around the wounded man the Americans crowded, while the officers shouted unheeded orders. Slowly they resumed the square formation, as if in momentary expectation of a charge from the mounted enemy. In the center of the square Gillie, Somers, and several other officers whom Carroll could not recognize, were holding an excited conference, while from above came the glad, triumphant singing of the Californians.

"No stranger rules our fathers' land
His flag in dust is lain;
No more we bow to his command,
We Sons of Ancient Spain."

Could it be possible that the Americans were about to retreat? If they did, his recapture was only a matter of hours. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, the light of a desperate chance in his face. He was halfway between the two forces, but somewhat nearer to the Californians. Pressing his cap firmly on his head, he darted out of the oaks and raced madly along the level road.

The sharp eye of Vanuela noted the sudden appearance of the flying uniformed figure as it shot into view and, followed by José, he spurred his horse after him. Carroll, covering the ground in mighty leaps, glanced back for an instant. They were almost upon him, Vanuela's lance held low, his face cruelly gleeful, his hand steady. In the single moment of Carroll's backward

glance, Hugo had recognized the insolent young officer of the stockade. Hardly thirty feet away was Vanuela when Carroll's foot caught in a tuft of grass and he went sprawling on his face.

But in that moment José, spurring his mount forward in a mighty bound, bumped sidewise against the neck of Vanuela's horse, causing it to stagger and rear in wild confusion.

"Sangre de Cristo, thou young fool, what dost thou mean?" Hugo roared, as he struggled with his startled steed.

José, who had recognized Carroll from the first, looked at Vanuela in silence, his face cool and determined, his hand resting meaningly on the pistol butt in his sash. For a moment they glared into one another's eyes—a moment long enough for Carroll to gather himself up and dash panting toward the square that opened to receive him.

As the ranks closed behind him, he found himself beside Marshall, whose deadly rifle was leveled in the direction of the two Californians. There was time neither to speak nor think. He threw himself bodily against the frontiersman, staggering him and sending the bullet from his rifle kicking up the dust on the roadway.

"Damnation!" snapped Marshall. "I would have gotten that fellow." Then, as he turned to greet Carroll, "Jehosophat, lieutenant, but

I am goll-durned glad to see you." And in a lower voice he added, "But you need n't have done it. 'T war n't the boy I was after; 't wuz the damn yalla-headed greaser. Sech ain't by no means natural, no more 'n a white crow. An' what ain't accordin' to natur ain't hulsum. If the Lord knows His business He is goin' to give me one more chance to get that varmint over the sights before this fool war is over."

A quick welcome from Somers and Gillie—there was no time for explanations—and the bugle sounded the order to advance. The square moved on slowly over the level ground, the officers in the center, the frontiersmen scattered in a skirmishing line. Irregularly their rifles spoke as they sighted a mounted enemy to the right or left. Well out of range, the Californians answered the shots with jeering waves of the hand.

"Here comes another wan av thim doughnuts," observed an Irish sailor, as he noted the gun crew drawing away from the cannon.

A screeching roar close above their heads, and something dropped to the ground in the center of the square.

"Be jabers, I'm dismasted," the Irishman remarked, as he mournfully surveyed the remnant of the lance shaft left in his hand.

The scattered frontiersmen were running madly

toward the gun, firing as they ran. But bounding and plunging at the riatas' ends, it was again beyond rifle range.

Sounds of angry voices came from the right. Marshall and several of the skirmishers were engaged in an altercation with an officer of the marines. The frontiersmen, as the gun was fired, had thrown themselves flat on the ground, springing to their feet and racing after it as soon as the shot had passed. The little officer was denouncing the tactics of Marshall and his men as shameful cowardice.

"Now, say, you young fellah, look ahere," Marshall was saying. "Jest you keep your shirt on, and don't get excited. It's awful bad for the liver in this hot climate. We're volunteers—we ain't tin soldiers, nor marines. We 'listed to fight, but not to get killed if we can help it. There ain't no glory, nor bravery, nor common hoss-sense in standing up to get shot at, when you might jest as well take it easy and lie down, and it's a whole dinged lot safer. You jest run back to your corral with the other officers, and we'll do all the skirmishing this fool army needs in its business. This war ain't run to suit me, nohow."

Disconcerted by the grinning faces of the frontiersmen, the officer gave up the attempt to discipline them, and retired within the square.

"Let Marshall alone," growled Gillie. "He generally knows what he is doing."

The captain had learned much in the past month.

Again a ball of white smoke burst in the midst of the Californians; again the skirmishers ran forward. Close enough they were, this time, to bring down one of the horses of the gun crew.

But amid the gleeful shouts of the Californians, the cannon was again whisked out of their reach. To advance too far from the square was to court death on a lance point. The fever of killing was in the veins of all.

Cota, flaunting the flag defiantly, was still hovering recklessly near the skirmishers' line. Gillie lowered his field glass and observed quietly, "I know that man with the flag. He is no Californian, but one of Willard's men,—Skene, an Austrian. He has deserted to the enemy. Fire on that fellow with the flag," he shouted to the skirmishers. "He's an American deserter."

Truly, with his blue eyes, fair face, and blond hair, Cota looked little like a Californian. A fusillade of shots from the skirmish line, and the flag staff dropped from his hands and his horse tumbled forward on its head, shot through the brain. But Cota was on his feet, racing away, bearing the colors with him. After him darted

the skirmishers, firing as they ran. Rejoining his comrades about the gun, Cota doffed his sombrero, and bowed ironically.

Again the cannon belched. This time the ball struck the square fairly in the center of the front rank, cutting off a sailor's leg at the thigh. All semblance of military formation was lost as the anxious Americans gathered around the injured man.

He was gazing in horror at the blood spouting from his severed limb, and babbling incoherently about home. A moment later he gasped, and stiffened in death.

With bitter curses on their lips, the frontiersmen raced after the enemy, only to find their efforts balked by the wonderful celerity with which the Californians maneuvered the gun.

Stubbornly, Gillie and his men held on. For three miles the Americans chased the flying field piece, shot after shot landing in their ranks, till at length, with six men dead and seven wounded, a retreat was ordered.

Wearily back to the Dominguez ranch house they trailed, tired with marching and saddened by death.

Carroll, walking by Marshall, told him of his escape and, as he mentioned the Black Matador, "It was you, was n't it, Jim?" he inquired.

Marshall seemed about to answer, but changed

his mind. He was scrutinizing the lieutenant curiously.

"Ain't the notion struck you, John, that there mought be a mighty good reason for keepin' it a secret for some one, or you'd been told before?" suggested Marshall cautiously.

"Why secrecy with me?" queried Carroll.

"The Black Matador had a reason, all right — all right. Don't you go now to spoil his game, John."

Marshall's words gave no clew.

As if to change the subject of conversation, he recounted to Carroll the events of the past two weeks.

"We rode to the beach with Arillo's men close behind us, watching us like a cat watches a mouse. When we gets there, the greasers comes and takes all our horses, and said they wuz comin' the next day for the guns. The next morning along comes the *Vandalia*, a Boston trading ship. 'Now hand over them guns,' sez Flores in a note he sends the captain, 'and git aboard.'

"But the captain, he flummoxes around day after day, with Flores sending him notes and proclamations every few hours an' him always givin' Flores excuses. Then Flores got mad and turned off the ditch that was bringing our water supply down to the beach.

"I guess that made the captain mad, for do you

know what he does?" Marshall lowered his voice. "He knocks the trunnions off them guns, spikes them, pounds rocks into their insides, and rolls them into the water at low tide."

"Had he agreed to give them up?" inquired Carroll.

"He said he'd leave them on the beach. I heard him tell Flores that on the hill, and it's on the paper."

Carroll stopped, and stared at the frontiersman. "God!" he exclaimed. "No, no, Marshall, you must be mistaken."

"Naw; no mistake about it. Him and Somers had a row, they say. Somers would n't do it because he signed the paper. Then the captain said he'd arrest him. 'All right,' sez Somers, 'here's my sword,' but the captain looked kind of solemn for a minute, and did n't take his sword. And then he goes off and gets some of them sap-headed marines to do it. Them fellahs would stand on their ear if he told them to."

Under ordinary circumstances Carroll would have bristled at Marshall's reference to the marines, but his mind was now full of Gillie's treacherous conduct.

"The shame of it—the shame of it!" he repeated.

"Yep—rotten business, all right" resumed Marshall. "So we all went on board the *Vandalia*,

and in a few days along comes that *Savannah* ship with Captain Mervine and about four hundred sailors—that's Mervine over there." He pointed to a tall officer marching at the head of the square.

"An' sez he to himself, sez Mervine, 'It's for me to show you fellahs how to fight greasers. Come on, boys.' Mervine did n't know them fellahs had a cannon, leastwise the captain did n't tell him, or he thought the old gun would be no good after we knocked it down the hill that time. An' so after makin' a lot of lances for the marines and sailors to have handy if the greasers should come down in a charge, we starts—and here we are now, gettin' back to the beach as fast as we can, with six dead men. I use to think that the greasers were good for nothing but yellin' and writin' proclamations, but they are some fighters, all right. This old war ain't run to suit me, nohow. When it's over, I am goin' to buy me a rancho, an' ride a white horse with silver-mounted saddle, like Don Andreas Pico. I don't have to soldier for twenty-five a month and found."

At the Dominguez Rancho, Mervine and Gillie secured oxen and wagons to carry the dead and wounded, and the march to the beach was resumed. Around them hovered the Californians, but much to the surprise of the Americans no

further attacks were made, and they continued their march unmolested. They could not know that the Californians had fired their last charge of good powder.

As the level line of the ocean sprang into view, they noted another ship swinging at anchor by the *Vandalia* and the *Savannah*. Quickly the news ran around the square that the *Congress*, with Commodore Stockton, had arrived, and the men broke into cheers.

When they reached the long yellow strip of sandy beach Gillie, accompanied by Carroll and Somers, went at once on board the *Congress*, the commodore's flagship, where the captain presented to Stockton his oral report of the happenings in the pueblo.

"You say," said Stockton, "that Flores, Arillo, Alvaro, Pico, De la Guerra, and all the others who had given us their paroles, are now in arms against us? By the Eternal," he roared, hot with anger, "the time for leniency has passed. When I get my hands on those fellows I will court-martial and hang every one of them. Shooting is too honorable a death for such men. Look at our poor dead boys on the canvas there."

Carroll, standing near, stared at him in silent horror. His face paled, and his heart sank within him.

Stockton was a man of action. Immediately

the marines and sailors of the three ships were landed on the beach, and under the guidance of Carroll and Somers for two weeks they practiced on the level sands the unaccustomed evolutions of land forces. At night they returned to the safe shelter of the ships, the commodore dreading a night attack from the Californians, whose watchful pickets patrolled the neighboring heights.

At last everything was declared in readiness. There was joy among the men, for to-morrow would see them marching on the rebellious pueblo. But there was no joy in the heart of Lieutenant Jack Carroll as he moodily paced the deck. To him the march of to-morrow meant only an added weight of woe and bitterness.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CABALLADA OF DON JOSÈ ANTONIO

"POR Dios, Servolo," said Don José Antonio, "but little news is this to me. Since I have noted for the last two months much English gold current in the pueblo, and heard of the British ships at Monterey, I have been suspicious. The Picos, I believe, have a hand in this. Ever since the governor, Don Pio, would have given the land to MacNamara, they have been friendly to any English plan. But never will I consent. English rule would mean the reign of heretics. England coerced the church in Ireland. If our land must go to another nation, I favor the Americans. They are not all like Captain Gillie."

For Servolo had just brought to Arillo the startling tale of his servant, who, loitering in the moonlight in a lonely spot, had overheard two men, whom he could not recognize, discussing a plan the purport of which was the placing of California under a British protectorate.

"The mischief is now afoot. None knows how soon they may move. To stop it we must strike, and strike quickly. Wilt ride with me, Servolo?" asked the Don as he threw his serape around him and buckled on his sword belt.

Palera nodded assent. For a moment Arillo

hesitated, a tender light in his face, then, taking a candle from the table, he passed into his daughter's room.

She lay breathing quietly, her fair face framed in billows of lustrous black hair. One cheek was wet with a single tear. As the father bent over to touch his lips to her brow, she awoke, and gazed up at him in wonder.

"I must ride to the camp by San Pedro now," he explained. "Be of good cheer, but do not expect too much. I go to do that which may bring thee much happiness. I may have good news to-morrow night."

"What—what?"

He laid his hand warningly on her lips.

"Ask no questions, but pray for my success."

Only a moment the two horsemen stopped at the stockade gate. Arillo dismounted and went within, to return almost immediately with Benito Willard, who was mounted but unarmed. As their hoofbeats died away on the road to the south, a heavy figure drew from out the shadow of a near-by veranda.

"So-o-o, Arillo rides with Don Benito to the camp at the Palos Verdes. Some trickery have they planned. A wise man was the Englishman to warn me to watch Don José Antonio. He must know of this at once," muttered Vanuela as he dashed away in the darkness.

But few days had MacNamara remained in the confinement of the carcel. Flores, finally convinced that the attempt on the lives of the prisoners had been owing to an excess of zeal and a possible misunderstanding of his own command, had ordered both him and Ballestos released. It was his conversation with Vanuela that had been overheard by Palera's servant.

"Don Benito," said Arillo when they had arrived at the Temple ranch house where the Californian officers had established their headquarters, "to-morrow I am going to send you with a flag of truce to the edge of the mesa above the landing at San Pedro. Don Francisco Cota will be placed on the ridge above you. When he waves the Mexican flag thrice, do you wave your white flag, and seek an interview with Stockton. You may tell—"

The Don's voice was drowned by the loud barking of dogs outside. Servolo rushed to the door, and his sharp command sent them slinking away, save one wise old hound who persisted in sniffing suspiciously beneath the open window.

"You may tell him from me," went on Arillo, "that I am anxious to avoid further bloodshed. Tell him that he may land and take possession of the coast, and that no other nation will be allowed by us to obtain a foothold in California. Tell him that we will bring to his camp all the

supplies he may need, if he will refrain from attempting to march men through the country, a proceeding which will but engender bad feelings between two people who may have to live together in the future. On the other hand, we promise to refrain from any hostile movement and to abide by the results of the war beyond the Rio Grande, whatever they may be."

But yesterday, to add to Arillo's growing discouragement, had come rumors of Mexican defeats beyond the Rio Grande, and the tale, all too accurate, of the total failure of the powder-making experiments at San Gabriel. Not only Don José Antonio but Alvaro, Garfias, Cota, Rico, and many others would have no regrets should Stockton offer honorable terms of surrender. But the pride of the Castilian would never permit them to seek mercy from an armed enemy. Far better a hopeless struggle than a loss of dignity. Any well-defined offer would have to come from the American.

While Don José Antonio had but little hope that the proposition for a truce submitted to Willard would be accepted by Stockton, yet negotiations would have been opened. Then, if he could secure from the American the assurance that the pueblo would not be burdened with military rule, and that the matter of the broken paroles would be forgiven and forgotten, Arillo was ready

to throw the whole weight of his influence in favor of surrender. For some days he had been pondering the plan, and now the startling information that there was a pro-British plot afoot determined him to delay no longer. He was confident that any terms of surrender compatible with the dignity of the *gente de razon* would be accepted by the Californians in spite of the possible opposition of Flores, who at the present time was absent at San Juan Capistrano.

Some three miles inland from where, the next day, Benito Willard and Servolo lay on the edge of the mesa, was a long gap in the brown land rolls, there rising almost to the dignity of hills. Past this opening, hour after hour, amid clouds of swirling dust, rode the four hundred mounted men of the Californian army, surrounded by three thousand riderless range horses. Like the fabled king of France, Arillo was marching his *caballada* of men and horses, not up a hill, but "round a hill and round again." He was making a demonstration in hope that the American commander would more readily offer peace on acceptable terms.

Impatiently Don Benito watched the motionless figure of Cota on the ridge. He saw a breech-clouted Indian canter up, confer with him a moment, and then disappear. Turning his glance oceanward, he noted that the boats which but

a short time before had left the flagship, were, in response to a string of signal flags, now returning to the ships.

Again he turned his glass on the hills. The *caballada* was still in motion, though the dimness of coming night was already falling over the land. From far out over the water there came to him the creaking of the windlass, and the hoarse chanteys of the sailors. He could see the men strung out along the yards. The ships were making sail.

Again Willard turned the glass inland. From the figure of the standard bearer, now hardly discernible in the gathering dusk, came no warning motion. In desperation the American sprang to his feet and waved the white cloth frantically. But there was no response from the ships as, beating their way against the breeze, they drew slowly from shore on their way to San Diego.

Far too well had the *ruse de guerre* of Don José Antonio done its work. To Commodore Stockton the lookouts at the mastheads had reported that over three thousand cavalry had been counted, passing an opening in the ridge. Believing that the Californians had received reinforcements from Sonora, and that to attack them with six hundred sailors and marines would be madness, Stockton had given orders to set sail at once

for San Diego, where a good harbor afforded protection against the dangerous easterly winds of the winter season.

Disheartened by the failure of Arillo's plan to end the war, Willard rode back to camp. Cota had already arrived. In response to Arillo's sharp inquiry as to why he had not given the signal, he stated that an Indian had brought him a note, signed by Don José Antonio, instructing him not to give the signal until further orders reached him.

"They have outwitted us," said Arillo sadly. "Do not grieve, my dear Francisco," he added kindly, as he noted Cota's downcast face. "I myself am to blame. I made too much demonstration." And he sighed as he thought of the sad-faced girl to whom he could bring naught but tidings of disappointment.

Hugo Vanuela, seated smoking by a camp fire, from under his broad-brimmed hat watched the four as they rode through the camp. His face, lit by the flare of the embers, was inscrutable, but his dark soul was filled with an unhallowed joy. MacNamara, sitting opposite, could not restrain a chuckle.

"Por Dios, Hugo, thou art not wanting in cleverness. The plan of the note was thine own. Rest assured it shall not be forgotten in the days to come."

Gladly would Vanuela have seen the Californians surrender to Stockton, but a reconciliation which would leave Arillo in high favor with the conquerors was no part of his plans. It was he whom the barking dogs had driven from beneath the window of the Temple ranch house.

Arillo and Palera searched in vain next day for the missing messenger. At that very moment the half-wild fellow, who had known little of mission training, was miles away, galloping gladly to his home in the hills. The Indians in the camp, firm in their loyalty to the son of Leo, swore that they knew nothing of the man.

Far out at sea, below the decks of the *Cyane*, Lieutenant John Carroll tossed restlessly in his hammock. He was thinking of Stockton's threat. The princely Don José Antonio, the kindly Alvaro, the jovial, witty Pico, young Palera with the dreamer's face and poet's soul, each doomed to die a felon's death on the scaffold!

Laden with a new weight of woe, persistently the words of the Indian crone, fraught with a more sinister meaning, echoed through his burdened brain:

"The great hearts you revere shall be humbled —blood shall smear your path—sad and long is the way—your heart shall be crushed as by a stone."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RETURN OF THE VICTORS

BY the river bank opposite the Paredon Bluff the people of the pueblo were waiting, laden with flowers,—flowers in wreaths and nosegays, in baskets and bouquets,—waiting with fluttering flags and gayly improvised banners, for the return of their victorious army from the camp at Palos Verdes.

When two weeks before a courier had arrived with news of the victory at Dominguez Ranch and of the retreat of the invaders, great had been their joy. But beneath it was always a lurking fear of the future, a fear that grew almost to a certainty when they learned, a few days later, that the American commodore had arrived and had landed his men on the beach. But yesterday, when a glad-faced, breathless messenger had raced madly into the plaza with the glorious and unexpected tidings that the three American ships had sailed away to the south, the pueblo went wild with joy.

As in the dim far ages in the hills of old Spain their ancestors had waited for the mail-clad knights of Aragon and Castile, returning victorious from a successful foray against the infidel Moor,

so waited the people of the pueblo. On the worn faces of the old men, in the soft, dark eyes of the women, was the light of joy triumphant. For once again the noble men of their unconquerable race—the race that had given a new world to man, the race that had always led the way to the untrodden wilderness, the race that had always been in the forefront of the age-long battle for the Holy Faith—had met the enemy in the deadly roar of battle and had emerged triumphant. They wondered now that they had ever doubted.

Clear and stirring on the evening air burst the melodious thrill of a bugle call, and along the top of the low mesa beyond the river appeared a long line of horsemen. At the sight of the waiting crowd on the east bank their cheers swept across the chasm of the river bed. Down the steep trail south of the Paredon Bluff the horsemen scrambled, and, as they formed in columns of four on the opposite bank, Servolo Palera, riding in the van, unslung his guitar and lifted his voice in song—a song in which every voice joined:

"The tide that flowed in Cortéz' veins,
The blood of conquering Spain,
The race that won these hills and plains,
Has conquered once again.

"Within our hearts the hope is strong,
The hope that cannot die—
For right has triumphed over wrong
Beneath our southern sky.

"No stranger rules our fathers' land,
His flag in dust is lain;
No more we bow to his command,
We Sons of Ancient Spain."

Joyously, triumphantly, the clear soprano voices of the women on the opposite bank took up the glad refrain, for by this time the verses of Servolo had become the battle hymn of the revolution, and were known to every man, woman, and child in the pueblo.

As the feet of the horses splashed through the shallow water the waiting women rushed forward. The men sprang to the ground and enfolded in their arms their wives and sisters; children clung ecstatically to the laced pantaloons of their fathers, clamoring for recognition until strong arms grasped them and tossed them high in the air. Old men, their faded eyes moist with pride, threw their arms around the broad shoulders of their stalwart sons, and kissed them gravely on both cheeks. With flowers wide-flung they showered them, flowers in wreaths and garlands, thrown about the necks of the soldiers, stuck in the bridles of the horses, set in musket barrels, and hung on the point of every shining lance.

In all that joy-maddened throng there was no face more radiant with pride than that of Señora Arillo. For was it not her cannon—the cannon of the church, now standing by the water's edge,

triumphantly wreathed with blood-red roses—that had sent the Americans scuttling back to their ships? Was it not her husband, Don José Antonio, who had commanded the detachment, and her son Manuel who had fired the gun?

"Ah, my son," she said, with a little sob in her throat, "how proud I am of thee!"

He stood erect, one hand grasping the long lance staff, the other arm around his mother.

"Not so proud, mother, as I am, as all the army is, of thee and thy cannon. It is the greater pride to be the son of such a mother."

Though Loreto Arillo's face was tired and worn, there was gladness in her eyes, for it was indeed joy to her that father and brothers had come home unharmed and laden with glory. Resolutely, with the patient courage of her race and the apparent obedience of the Spanish woman, she had seemed to put away from her the very thought of Carroll, and to-day she was the gayest and gladdest of the giddy throng, a gayety that was half real, half assumed, to hide and still the heavy ache deep down in her heart. Of Carroll's escape from the Paredon Bluff she was aware. The news had been brought to her by Father Estenaga as a street rumor, but the old man had smiled knowingly as he told the tale.

José came striding toward her. Bending down, he whispered in her ear.

"He is safe, sister mine—I saw him. He is with his friends, and unharmed."

As Don José Antonio dropped from his horse his searching eyes sought out Loreto.

"Is all well with thee, little one?" he asked anxiously, as he held her at arm's length, closely scrutinizing her face.

"All is well, father," she said firmly.

Her eyes met his bravely, but there was a piteous little tremor about her mouth. Don José Antonio understood, and with a sigh he turned away to meet his wife.

José, after greeting the señora in his grave, undemonstrative fashion, now turned aside, seeking through the moving crowd for a glimpse of the familiar figure of Delfina. Catching sight of her, he drove his lance head into the ground and hastened to her side, a hopeful light in his gray eyes.

She noted his coming, but with head averted continued her gay conversation. She had been watching him furtively for fully five minutes, but had given no sign.

"Ah, José, back again, and unharmed," she gibed, as she took his hand. "How many wicked Americans hast thou slain since I saw thee last? I had half hoped thou wouldst be an officer by this time. What shall we call thee—major, captain, or is it commandant? Where are thy epaulets,

and stars, or art thou carrying water for the thirsty soldiers on the hot days?"

With all his strange youthful dignity, José was keenly sensitive. His teeth met his lower lip in an effort to still its trembling. Then he answered in a bantering tone, much like her own, "I still have hopes, Delfina. The war is young yet. But epaulets and officers' commissions do not grow on every bush, to be had for the picking."

The girl looked at him, startled. It was the first time that he had ever made an effort to pay her in her own coin. Her face changed, and in a softened voice she said to him, half pleadingly, her eyes beaming full upon him, "Thou wilt come home of course, this evening, with the Don and Manuel?"

The boy's angry flush had faded. There was a set expression about his mouth as he responded coolly, "No, Delfina, I shall not come home until—well thou knowest—until I can speak my heart to the Don. I ride to-night to the outpost north of the Verdugo Hills, by order of Commandant Flores."

She drew a little nearer to him, and was about to speak, when the bugle blared the signal to fall in, and José, his face sad but his head held high, took his place in the ranks of the cavalcade as it marched up the long orchard-embowered street toward the plaza.

"Adios, father; I leave thee now," he said to Arillo, as he swung his horse out of the ranks.

Don José Antonio, reaching out, caught the boy's bridle rein, and following José turned his horse into a side street.

"Why adios? Art thou not coming home, my son?"

"No; I ride to the Verdugo Hills for the commandant."

"Wilt thou be home to-morrow?" queried Arillo.

"No, I am under a vow, father," he said "not to return home till a certain thing comes to pass."

Arillo's grave eyes searched the boy's face. It was nothing new, this placing of oneself under a vow—a voluntary penance—among those of great piety and devotion, but José had never been remarkable for either. Could the boy be telling an untruth? Was the intended absence but an excuse for some youthful folly? Yet José had never lied to him.

"Thou wilt give me thy word, José, that it is nothing that would bring thee or me shame,—nothing that can bring dishonor to the name of Arillo?"

"I pledge you my word, father."

His big honest eyes met the Don's unflinchingly.

"Then, my son, I trust thee. God go with thee."

He released his hold on the bridle rein, and José disappeared down a side street, on his way to the outpost at the Verdugo Hills.

That night, wrapped in his blanket, lying asleep beneath an oak, there came to him again the familiar vision of the days of his babyhood. Once more he gazed at the dimly remembered face of his father, seated with his head against the background of the flag. Again, with bated breath and stealthy step, he crept forward toward him. So near he came that he could almost touch the table. Then he awoke.

Above him, in the wide-spreading branches, the leaves were whispering mysteriously of things far beyond the ken of mortal man; still and deathlike were the forms of his sleeping comrades; silent as the tomb was the gloomy sweep of inky plain. Sharply silhouetted against the great orb of the rising moon a lone coyote, with upward pointed nose, howled dismally.

Trembling with the sense of something uncanny, overwhelmed with fear of the unknown force that brought him its nightly message of mystery, José shuddered. Then, as the memory of his father's face came to him, the boy sobbed hopelessly in the folds of his serape.

And day by day, Delfina wept and prayed and watched for the lover who came no more.

For many days the people of the pueblo of

Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, held fiesta. After the long, forced abstinence from all gayety that had characterized the government of Gillie, the town gave itself up for a whole week to a merry round of balls, horse races, and other festivities. Late into the night the homes about the plaza resounded with the gay tinkling of guitars and the merry patter of dancing feet. Through the open windows, squares of golden light in the surrounding blackness, came the low sweet laughter of women and the sound of joyous singing.

Everywhere the arms of the Californians were triumphant. At the approach of Don Manuel Garfias, with a detachment from the pueblo, Lieutenant Talbot and his small company of ten men, left in charge at Santa Barbara, escaped and fled to the mountains. They succeeded in crossing over into the San Joaquin Valley, and only after suffering incredible hardships did they reach San Francisco, hungry, worn, and ragged. San Luis Obispo and the surrounding district were again in the hands of the Californians, and daily the young men of that locality were riding into the pueblo and joining the forces of Flores.

Fremont, with his "Bears," was reported somewhere north of Monterey, unable to move, without powder for his rifles or mounts for his men. Into the mountains and out of his reach had been driven the cattle and horses of the

seacoast ranchos. Stockton, at San Diego, was said to be hard pressed by a superior force of Californians and Indians.

By every dusty, travel-stained horseman, rumors many and vague reached the pueblo. England had declared war against the United States, and the Mexicans had won a signal victory on the Rio Grande. Strange stories were heard, coming from no one knew where, that the mother nation, though sore pressed herself, had at last harkened to the cry of her far-off daughter, and that a Mexican army under Governor Pio Pico was now on its way north through Sonora.

For a few days the escape of the lieutenant remained a mystery, and then was speedily forgotten. The peons, filled with fear of the Black Matador, held their peace, but the regular guards in charge of the prisoners admitted that they had that night drunk much wine—wine furnished by an unknown hand—and had slept at their post of duty. Flores, flying into a passion, vowed vengeance on the careless sentinels. But the sudden retreat of Stockton, followed by the week of rejoicing, drove the matter from his mind. One prisoner more or less mattered little.

Though gladness reigned in the pueblo at the ever welcome news that trickled in from the outside, it found but a faint echo in the heart of Loreto Arillo. The excitement attending the

return of the army and the subsequent festivities died away, and the thoughts of the grieving girl turned ever to the southward, where, far beyond the hills that bounded her vision, lived and moved among the enemies of her people the man to whom she had given all the first love of her woman's heart. Day by day love and duty waged bitter battle within her soul. Pityingly, his heart grieving with hers, the Don watched her unceasingly, noting her downcast eyes, her drooping mouth, and fading cheeks. In the dusk of the evening on the wide, vine-covered veranda she, knowing that he understood, would creep into his arms like some hurt wild thing, and silently lay her face against his cheek. His own eyes moist, but his lips silent, for there was naught of comfort he could utter, the father could feel her slight frame quiver in a storm of stifled sobs as she lay in his arms.

During the long hours of the day, under the cold, calm gaze of the señora and busy with the little round of household duties, her pride held her quivering lips still and set, but alone in the still reaches of the night the sorrow that wrung her soul gripped her close. In vivid flashes of memory she saw the laughing blue eyes of Carroll, the straight poise of his manly head, and heard the echo of his virile voice. Always there came to her the horrid remembrance of her grief's

beginning—the night of the clanking chains—and the cruel memory of Carroll's agonized face that morning by the river when, with bloody head and shaking limbs, he was led away from her across the stream.

Then she would rise, clad only in the clinging virginal garments of the night, her feet and arms bare, her unbound hair a tumbling cataract of black over her white shoulders, and steal alone through the silent, deserted rooms to the family chapel in the rear of the house. There, where the candles always burned brightly before the little wax statue of the Madonna, she would rest her fevered brow against the cool edge of the altar and pour forth her heart's cry for help.

"Most Holy Virgin, pray for me that I may learn to forget him. Pray God that He may forgive me for loving him,—an enemy of my people. I am a wicked girl to do so—but—I—I love him—I love him so! Save and protect him from all harm."

Dreams came to her, clear and vivid. Often she was in Carroll's arms, basking in the radiance of his wondrous smile. Then in the far, unseen distance she would hear, coming nearer and nearer, the rattle of chains and the crackle of musketry. His face would grow pale and set, his head bruised and bloody, and he would be snatched from her by unearthly arms reaching

out of the blackness. Then she would wake to the misery of the present, to sob alone till the dim radiance of the dawn lightened the latticed window.

In the pueblo, life swung back to its wonted way. Gone was the scorching summer heat, to be followed by a long succession of days bright with the strange, cool sunshine of the California autumn. The fall rains, early this year, were already greening the brown of the hills and each morning wrapping the distant mountains in a fairy veil of misty blue.

Down by the stream, no longer shrunken by summer drought but flowing wide and full, where the vineyards and orchards stretched in irregular patches of green and brown, the peons and Indians were busy as of old. The ripe purple grapes hung in heavy clusters on the low, close-cropped vines, and men sang as they filled the heavy baskets.

On the hill above the plaza still stood the flagstaff erected by Gillie, but from it drooped now the Mexican tricolor. To Don Augustin Alvaro it was not an unpleasant sight, and he often sat at the end of the veranda where his eye could catch it, as it lifted lazily in the vagrant breeze. To him, as to all the people of the pueblo, the memory of Gillie and his rough frontiersmen seemed but a fantastic dream that

for a few short months had broken the even tenor of their lives. But as he gazed at the flag he sighed, a sigh which, if not despairing, was still not at all expressive of the high hopes that animated the hearts of the majority of the Californians.

Don Francisco de la Guerra, a portly, cheery man of middle age seated opposite him on the veranda, looked at Don Augustin inquiringly. De la Guerra was a confirmed and incurable optimist, and he wondered at Alvaro's lack of enthusiasm.

"Bah!" he said, as he straightened his shoulders. "We of the race of Cortéz, the race that discovered and explored the new world, can it be that we shall fear the Americans, and they but mere money-getters and laborers? Never! The matchless courage of our people still lives and shall conquer. They will never come back. Impossible."

Don Augustin's keen eyes crinkled up into something akin to a smile.

"But how they can shoot, Don Francisco, those *bandoleros* of Gillie! Jesus! They could shoot the eyelashes from a gopher, and he running in the moonlight. Por Dios, yes."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BATTLE IN THE DARK

"YOUR eyes are better than mine, lieutenant; see if you can find them. They should be somewhere hereabouts." Captain Gillie handed the glass to Lieutenant Carroll.

The two officers, in command of forty mounted frontiersmen, were eagerly scanning the landscape in search of General Kearney and his party, who were reported to be on their way to San Diego.

Reinforcements were at last coming to Stockton at San Diego, but they were far from the overwhelming force he had expected and the Californians had feared.

General Kearney had started from Fort Leavenworth with fifteen hundred dragoons, but meeting on the Santa Fé trail the famous scout, Kit Carson, who had been sent east by Stockton with news of the complete and peaceful conquest of California and of the occupation of Los Angeles, Kearney had decided that his large force was not needed.

"There they come, captain, down that gulch to the east," said Carroll as he returned the glass.

With a welcoming cheer the frontiersmen galloped up the slope, and in a few minutes the two parties were exchanging congratulations.

Hardly a hundred men were with Kearney. The greater part of his force he had sent back, and had scattered the rest as garrisons in Arizona and New Mexico, reserving only the small escort of dragoons, with two mountain howitzers. Scout Carson, with his bodyguard of three Delaware Indians, had returned with Kearney's party to guide it through the wilderness of the Colorado basin.

Burnt brown by desert suns, gaunt and emaciated from privation, were Kearney's men. Nearly half of them were on foot; the others, with the exception of the officers, were mounted on broken-down mules. The horses of the expedition had been unable to withstand the terrific strain of the march across the Colorado desert. Curiously the soldiers stared at the buckskin shirts and unmilitary garb of the frontiersmen, who returned the stare, amusement showing in their faces as they noted the dimmed brilliancy of the once gaudy dragoon uniforms.

The news of the revolt of the Californians, as Gillie recounted it to Kearney, was but little of a surprise. Letters taken from a captured Mexican, a few days before, had told him that the conquest had proved abortive, and during the last few days the march of the Americans had been closely watched by mounted men from the neighboring heights.

"Captain Gillie, what do you know of the enemy, his numbers and position?" asked General Kearney. He was a full-eyed, kindly-faced man, and he puffed energetically at a short black pipe as he spoke.

"About a hundred and sixty men, under Don Andreas Pico. I believe they have headquarters at the Santa Isabel Rancho near the Indian village of San Pascual."

"Well," said the general slowly, "we did not come two thousand miles to be kept out of San Diego at the last moment. I am not overly anxious for a fight, but we are going through to the town. We will make a night attack."

"Issue instructions," he said, turning to his orderly, "to have everything in readiness to march an hour before sunrise."

No bugle blared to awaken the sleepers in the American camp that chilly morning of December 6, 1846. A touch on the shoulder, a whispered word in the darkness, and the weary, rain-soaked men, springing to their feet, swallowed a few mouthfuls of food, mounted their horses, and moved silently down the road through the dense blackness of the night. Thirty men were left behind to guard the baggage, with instructions to move forward as rapidly as possible.

It was bitterly cold, cold with the damp, penetrating chill of the California winter morning.

The chattering of the men's teeth could be heard, with the jingling of the sabers and the creak of the gun wheels, as they trotted on through the fog-laden gloom.

Carroll, riding close behind Kearney and Gillie past the low adobes of the Indian village of San Pascual, was silent and thoughtful. Dimly he could see ahead of him the big white horse ridden by Captain Johnston, who, with a dozen dragoons, composed the advance guard. Soldier-like, the lieutenant thrilled at the thought of the coming conflict, yet there was sadness in his soul, for somewhere in the all-enveloping darkness about him were the courtly men of the pueblo,—the quaint Alvaro, the jovial Don Andreas, Palera to whom he owed his life, and probably Don José Antonio Arillo, the father of the woman he loved.

He peered ahead into the gloom, but could discern neither sight nor sound of Johnston and his men. They had drawn far ahead.

Discordantly a rattle of shots and red flashes of flame cut into the softened stillness of the night. He heard a stentorian voice ordering the charge, then cries of dismay, the screams of wounded horses, and the clatter of steel.

Hurriedly, Kearney, Gillie, and the little band of dragoons about them spurred their mounts forward. In an instant Carroll, saber in hand, found himself in the midst of the mêlée. Around

him on every side were the forms of mounted men, half seen in the darkness,— forms lunging and stabbing at them with the long, needle-pointed lances. The dragoon at his right fired his pistol, and then, clutching frantically at the lance point that had entered his breast, reeled backward from his horse.

An order shouted in Spanish, and in a twinkling the Americans found themselves alone. The Californians had vanished as quickly as they had appeared, the muffled thunder of their hoof-beats dying away in the black wall ahead.

"After them, boys! They won't stand!" shouted Captain Moore, who rode at Carroll's left.

As they dashed on in a mad gallop the lieutenant glanced back uneasily. The sun was rising, and objects could now be discerned more distinctly, but to his amazement there was no sign of the main body of the dragoons. Instead, twenty or thirty of Kearney's men, who had dropped behind on their wretched mounts, were scattered in groups of twos and threes along the road, flogging and spurring their mules in a vain effort to reach the scene of hostilities.

Another scattering volley down the road, and a voice called out in agony, "For God's sake, men, come up! Come up!"

Yells, groans, and the angry clink of steel were

straight ahead of them. The Californians had turned, and were again attacking the advance guard.

In a ring around the two cannon, the officers and men of the advance and Kearney's small party were making an heroic stand. Like clinging smoke wreaths the fog wrapped their shifting forms as they battled horse against horse, man against man, sword against lance shaft.

Gillie, fighting manfully by Carroll's side, cleverly avoided a lance thrust and drove his sword through a Californian's arm. Then a lance point struck him full in the mouth, knocking him from his horse. Whatever his oddities, Captain Gillie was a man of magnificent personal courage. Springing to his feet, his face streaming blood, he continued the unequal struggle on foot.

In the midst of the press of lunging men and rearing horses, Carroll himself was busy parrying the steel-tipped point that was thrust at him again and again. Rising in his stirrups, he sent his horse forward, and ignoring the sting of steel in his thigh, he brought his saber down, shearing the wooden shaft in twain. In an instant his antagonist had drawn his sword, and as their horses sidled together their blades crossed. The lieutenant was face to face with Servolo Palera.

For a moment their swords slithered along their lengths. Carroll, with the fine sense of

touch of the true swordsman, felt that he was easily master.

"Surrender, Señor Palera. I cannot—"

"No, no," panted Servolo, as he gave way before Carroll's onslaught. "No, no; we are soldiers now, friend Carroll."

As Servolo's sword flew from his hand, Carroll saw dimly above the Californian's head the butt of an upraised musket. Lifting his steed forward, he interposed his saber. Quick enough he was to divert but not to stop the blow. The musket fell on the shoulder of Palera, knocking him from his horse.

The owner of the musket, one of Carson's Indians, dropped to the ground, seized the rifle, and again raised it above his head when Carroll, who had already dismounted, drove his fist in the fellow's face.

"Harm him, you red-skinned devil, and, by God, I will kill you!" he yelled.

It was full morning now, but dim and misty. A group of Californians, some yards distant, were yelling with glee as they galloped off with one of the howitzers attached to the riatas from their saddles. About the remaining gun the fight was still on. Half of the saddles of the Americans were empty, the horses standing stock still, stupidly trembling in every limb, or galloping riderless about the plain. Wounded

men, all of them Americans, seemed to be everywhere, groaning in pain, and crawling from under the feet of the frenzied horses.

Captain Moore, ahead of Carroll, gasped as if in surprise, and the lieutenant glimpsed the handbreadth of a lance point protruding from between his shoulders as he went backward out of the saddle.

Again the quick, sharp order in Spanish, and once more the splendid mounts of the enemy bore them swiftly out of reach. A moment later, with a wild cheer, the main body of the dragoons galloped up, but too late to take any part in the fight. The Californians had abandoned the field.

The Americans were nominal victors, but at what a cost! Of the sixty-five dragoons and frontiersmen actively engaged, one half were *hors de combat.* On the ground about the remaining cannon, and along the winding trail, lay thirteen dead and eighteen wounded, among the latter Captain Gillie and General Kearney. Not a single Californian, dead or wounded, was to be seen.

In the dim light of the misty dawn, Kearney's face was drawn and haggard.

"God! This is awful!" he said, as he surveyed the field.

"Take twenty men, lieutenant, and the best horses, and ride back at once. They may attack the baggage guard."

As Carroll with his party galloped back through the village, he noted the stalwart form of Captain Johnston, the handsome officer at whose merry jests he had laughed the night before, lying stiff in death, his sword still in his clenched hand, a blackened hole in the middle of his forehead. Close behind lay a dragoon, shot through the heart. Both had fallen in the first onslaught of the Californians. The half-naked body of the soldier, and the broken links of a watchchain hanging to Johnston's doublet, told that the work of looting had already been begun by the Indians in the ranks of the enemy.

The Californians made no further attack. During the long day, a day of chilling, drizzling rain, the Americans, sobered by the unexpected revelation of the fighting qualities of the enemy, gathered their dead and tended to their wounded, who were placed in a camp hospital on the top of a hillock.

In the still hours of the night the lance-pierced bodies of the dead were laid to rest under a drooping willow, their only requiem the long-drawn howling of the distant wolves. Above them, as if in sympathy, the inky sky wept steadily. Bowed with grief, about the unseen graves were the sorrowing men, silent save where a strong man choked back a sob as the clay fell on the faces of the comrades they had all

learned to know and to love far beyond the manner of men—the comrades who had shared with them the chilling cold of mountain nights, the days of blistering desert sun, the perils and privations of the long march of two thousand miles.

Carroll sighed. More blood, and still more—would it never end? Even should Kearney supersede Stockton, an event he had looked forward to with hope, still there would be no mercy now for the men of the broken paroles.

"How truly she spoke, that accursed witch," he thought, as her prophetic words echoed in his memory: "Blood shall smear your path, shall smear your path."

As the lieutenant and the burial party returned to the camp on the rock-strewn hillock, he heard the click of picks and the scuffle of shovels in the sand. Kearney's men were digging for water to assuage the raging thirst of their wounded, whose moans could be heard in the darkness. On the rock-covered hilltop there was hardly a spot where they could lie in comfort. One dragoon, a stalwart sergeant, was in the last agonies of death. Dr. Griffin, the surgeon of the expedition, was busy, as he had been all day, with the injured men. Only a few mouthfuls of hardtack and dried beef were left in the knapsacks of the soldiers.

Carroll's first thought was for Palera. Much to his relief, he found that beyond a severely

bruised shoulder Servolo was unharmed. As the Californian smilingly answered the lieutenant's anxious inquiry, he shivered with cold.

"Half of my blanket is yours, Servolo," said Carroll. "Let us lie close for greater warmth."

Wrapped close together in the same blanket, the two men who, but a few hours before, had sought each other's lives lay silent for a space. Between the lugubrious howls of the coyotes on the plains they could hear about them the piteous groans of the wounded men. The big man a few feet away gasped loudly, and the death rattle in his throat told that the end had come. The night had cleared, and mockingly in the black vault above, the cheerful stars smiled down upon them.

The two men, lying silent side by side, were staring into each other's eyes. Carroll was the first to speak.

"I owe you much, Señor Palera—much that cannot be repaid with words."

"But nobly have you already repaid it, friend Carroll."

"General Kearney has just promised me that you will be exchanged early in the morning," went on the lieutenant, "and after the war is over perhaps—perhaps—there may be much that I can do."

Servolo's eyes glistened in the firelight, but he

sighed wearily and shook his head. The strange presentiment that had haunted him night and day, a presentiment that he would never live to see the ending of the war, was now strong upon him. For more than a month he had been as one waiting and watching for the coming of death.

"I thank thee, friend Carroll," he responded with a wan smile. "Glad will I be, of course, to rejoin my comrades, but beyond that there is naught that thou couldst do—that any one could do—for me."

The utter hopelessness in Servolo's whisper awoke a throb of sympathy in Carroll's kindly heart. But he forbore questioning.

"Señor Carroll," said Palera suddenly, "do you love her truly—with the love of an honorable man? In the name of the angels and the saints, answer me truthfully. This means everything to me."

The question came from Servolo's lips with un-Castilian directness.

Carroll started, then without hesitation he answered, firmly and gravely, "By my hope of Heaven, I do, Servolo."

"It is well. Doubting you, I could kill you as you sleep, but believing you, I am happy—as happy as a broken heart can be."

Within the closely wrapped blanket Palera grasped the American's hand and pressed it

quietly. He sighed again, and laying his arm across the other, drew closer to him in the chill night.

Surrounded by the dead and dying, slumbered, the two men their arms about each other,—two men whose hearts were throbbing with love for a weeping woman in the distant pueblo of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels.

Lower and dimmer smouldered the camp fires on the hillock. Over the wide, gray world brooded the starlit silence, broken only by the restless movements of the watchful sentries.

Borne softly on the night wind came the shuffling tramp of many feet, the clink of accouterments, the sound of voices.

"To arms! To arms!" shouted a sentinel. The shrill alarm of the bugle in an instant transformed the sleeping camp into a scene of frantic activity.

"Who goes there?" bawled a dragoon, as he peered down the slope.

"Friends—relief from San Diego," came a reassuring shout from the hollow.

Even the wounded joined weakly in the exultant cheers that, sweeping over the plain, told the Californians on the hills that Commodore Stockton's reinforcements had eluded their careless sentries and were now sharing the contents of their well-filled haversacks with the hungry and dispirited men of Kearney's command.

CHAPTER XXV

VANUELA STRIKES

IN anticipation of the coming of Fremont, who was reported to be moving slowly south, the Californians had taken a position ten miles north of the pueblo, near the Verdugo ranch house.

Hugo Vanuela, seated sideways in his saddle, was idly watching the cavalry squadrons practicing field evolutions on the plain below. At the word of command, their well-trained steeds formed into a long line four deep, and with leveled lances they charged on the imaginary foe. Feigning flight, their broken squads suddenly reunited, swung around in two long curves, and completely surrounded the supposed enemy. Ever on the flanks of the columns whirled the cannons at the riatas' ends. But the señora's gun was no longer alone. Two others of Castro's guns had been discovered and unspiked, and Arillo now commanded a battery of four pieces, one of them the mountain howitzer captured from General Kearney at San Pascual.

During the last two months Vanuela had succeeded in communicating several times with Commodore Stockton at San Diego. By means of one of his Indian scouts he had forwarded to the

American commander a complete and accurate statement of the numbers and resources of the Californians. During these exchanges he lost no opportunity of inflaming the mind of the commodore against Don José Antonio Arillo, whom he pictured as the originator of the revolt and relentless in his hatred of everything American.

But Hugo's mind at the present moment was far more occupied with the folded papers in his hand than with past events or with the galloping squadrons on the plain below. The commandant had just instructed him to select a capable man to carry dispatches to Don Jesus Pico at San Luis Obispo.

Vanuela was pondering the problem. He was quite willing, even anxious, that the document which announced in grandiloquent terms the victory at San Pascual should fall into the hands of the Americans. He would have ridden with them himself, and thus insured their delivery to Fremont, but it was plain that he could not leave the pueblo at present. MacNamara was becoming importunate in his demands. He had intrusted to Vanuela the work of obtaining signatures to the petition addressed to the British commodore at Santa Barbara. Only yesterday an Indian had galloped from San Gabriel, where the supposed Spaniard, at Flores' command, had taken full charge of the powder making, with a note for

Vanuela requesting, even demanding, that Hugo report to him at once with definite information of the progress he was making. The Englishman was becoming decidedly troublesome. He would have to be placated in some way.

Absorbed in thought, Hugo failed to notice the approach of José Arillo, who, mounted on a spirited white horse, had trotted up behind him. As his glance met the gaze of the boy, there flashed on him the memory of the manner in which the youngster had foiled his attempt to lance the American officer at Dominguez. Hugo licked his lips wolfishly, and his face lit with cruel grimness.

"The young dog!" he muttered. "Him will I send. If the Americans catch him, he will die, even as Arillo is to die." But his spoken greeting was unusually courteous.

José, at Vanuela's unwonted graciousness, reined up his horse expectantly.

"Even now I was about to send for you, Señor Arillo," said Hugo deferentially. "Commandant Flores had instructed me to select a man—a capable, cautious man and a good rider—to perform a great service for the government. None better could I call to mind than thee."

"You honor me greatly, Señor Don Hugo," replied the boy, not to be outdone in courtesy. But his big gray eyes were scrutinizing the other

carefully. "I shall indeed be glad to be of service to the country. What is the mission?"

"I wish to be honest with you, Señor Arillo," Vanuela continued. "The service is not without danger. The commandant wishes to send these papers, announcing the victory at San Pascual, to Don Jesus Pico at San Luis Obispo. The man who succeeds in placing them in the hands of Don Jesus will win honor, fame, and a great name for himself. Do you volunteer?"

At Vanuela's last words an eager look came into the boy's face. He removed his sombrero, and with the other hand brushed back from his brow the hanging lock of ruddy hair. Then he answered quickly:

"Surely will I go, Señor Vanuela."

"Good!" Hugo handed him the dispatches.

José hesitated. "May I not ride to the pueblo and notify my father? It will take but little time," he pleaded.

"No, no," objected Vanuela hastily. "Speed is of great importance. You must take the road at once. The commandant's orders are that no one must know—no one. I myself will notify Don José Antonio for thee."

Still José hesitated. Vanuela, through his narrowed eyelids, was closely scanning the boy's face.

"Por Dios," he broke out haughtily, "return to

me the papers. I will seek another messenger—one who does not set terms and conditions."

"No, no; I will ride at once," replied the boyish victim. "Adios, señor."

He shook Vanuela's hand, swung his snow-white steed about, and galloped away. For the memory of Delfina's stinging words, "carrying water for the soldiers," returned to him with force. Ah! Now would she see what his superiors thought of him! When he returned, crowned with success, honored by the commandant and the whole army, how proud she would be of him!

As he galloped on through the cool morning sunshine his heart echoed to the sound of his horse's hoofs, ever beating out the words of the thoughtless girl. "Win a great name—win a great name."

But one thought clouded his happiness—a regret that he could not have told Don José Antonio of his good fortune and obtained his consent.

At that very moment the Don himself, seated in the large living room of his home, his military garb soiled and spattered, was listening to the petulant words of his wife.

"Dios de mi alma," she grumbled, "can the boy be possessed of an evil spirit? Again and again, I have been told, he has ridden into the pueblo from the camp at the Verdugos, but never comes

he to the house. Night and day Delfina cries. Holy Virgin—as if one weeping woman in the house were not enough!"

"Delfina!" There was sudden comprehension in Arillo's voice. "Ah, mother, mother, we have been blind. That is it,—a lover's quarrel; the young folks love one another."

"Bah, no; that would not keep him away. It would bring him here. Yet," she mused, "he has many strange ways; he is not like us. One cannot tell."

Delfina, an unwilling listener in the next room, heard the Don's even voice.

"José told me on his word of honor that he was under a vow not to return home until a certain thing had come to pass. Caramba! We have had enough of this mystery. He shall tell me at once," he added, a little impatiently.

The girl in the next room sat motionless as the door closed behind Arillo. José under a vow! Well she understood—a vow not to see her. Sobbing silently, she threw herself on her bed. Oh, why could he not be like other men, men who, though scorned and rebuffed, had again and again sung at her window, and made public profession of their love at balls by casting their sombreros at her feet, men who had borne her flaunting with smiling patience and redoubled protestations of devotion? Face to face with

such un-Castilian stubbornness, the girl was astounded and mystified.

Wiping her eyes, she hurried to the little chapel. Sinking on her knees, she looked long and reverently at the statue of the Madonna. How happy she looked! To the girl's superheated imagination, the fruit of weeks of worry, the waxen lips seemed to curve in a calm, contented smile.

"Ah," she sobbed, reaching out her open hand protestingly, "you may smile—you have had all your heart desires—you have your *nene*. You smile—you do not care. And I have prayed to you, night after night, day after day, to bring my José back to me. And still you smile. You do not care."

Wrought to a high pitch of excitement by her maddening thoughts, she sprang to her feet and advanced to the altar, a desperate look on her tear-stained face.

Halting, she bowed her head. "God forgive me," she murmured, "if it is wrong, but I must—I must—I must have him back."

As she glanced up again the peaceful smile of the Madonna maddened her. Almost beside herself with mingled anger and religious emotion, she reached out, took the waxen image of the infant Jesus from the arms of the statuette, and reverently wrapping it in the folds of a silken scarf,

hurried to the door. Kneeling again at the threshold, she whispered humbly but firmly:

"Holy Mother, forgive me, but you shall have it again when you bring him back to me."

Arillo had galloped back to the camp. The men were at dinner, grouped about the fires. José was nowhere to be found.

"José;" responded Vanuela coolly, in response to the query of the Don, "José is not here. He has been greatly honored, Señor Arillo. He is now riding with dispatches for Don Jesus Pico, by order of Commandant Flores."

Like a knife thrust he delivered the words, and joyed to see the sudden agony in the face of Don José Antonio.

"José!" he exclaimed. "That child carrying dispatches through a dangerous country? Sangre de Cristo! Some one shall surely answer to me for this! By the order of Flores, you say?"

Malicious gladness manifest in his dark face, Vanuela gazed gleefully after the Don as he spurred his horse madly toward the ranch house.

With face like a thundercloud, Arillo burst into the room where Flores sat, occupied with the papers on the table.

"Sanguis," he panted, "can it be true that you have sent that boy, that child José, to Obispo with dispatches? It seems incredible!"

Flores' gaze, as he met the Don's indignant look, was steady, but his face flushed angrily at Arillo's words.

He himself would have chosen another messenger, but Vanuela had assured him the boy was competent. The thing was done; the boy was now far out of reach. Besides, he was irritated by the peremptory tone of Arillo. The commandant was in no mood to be dictated to by any one.

"Calm thyself, my dear Don José Antonio," he said reassuringly. "It is true the boy was sent by my command. He is a soldier and an Arillo, and obeys orders without questioning. He is mounted on one of the *blancos* of Don Andreas Pico, which, as you doubtless know, can outdistance anything in California. There is really no need for anxiety."

Don José Antonio bit his lip; his face was white with indignation. Regaining control of himself, he said slowly: "Don José Maria Flores, you are our commandant and governor, and as such I salute you and obey you." He bowed formally, a bow which Flores, rising to his feet, as gravely returned. "But if that boy comes to any harm, by all the saints and angels, when the war is over, California—nay, the whole earth—will be much too small to hold us both. One of us shall die."

The commandant was not lacking in cool courage.

"I accept, Don José Antonio. If—as I believe is very unlikely—the boy prove unfortunate, then I will meet you at your pleasure."

"There is much else at the bottom of all this, Don José Antonio," said Alvaro, when Arillo had told him his story.

The two men were seated on their horses, facing one another.

"I cannot believe it is the doing of Commandant Flores, he is—"

He stopped short, his eyes fixed in wonder—wonder in which there was sudden, startled recognition.

A man had ridden up quietly behind Arillo. It was MacNamara, a black, wide-brimmed American hat well down on his head, a big bandana handkerchief drawn over his mouth as a protection against the flying dust of the road. As he walked his horse past the two, he jerked the handkerchief down from his face and bared his head in courteous salute.

Don Augustin sat rigid as a statue. Arillo, his back to the newcomer, stared at his friend uncomprehendingly. Suddenly Don Augustin stepped his horse forward and whispered in Arillo's ear, "Quick, quick! Ride with me!"

Alvaro was whirling down the trail, slashing his horse with his quirt. Don José Antonio, reading in the agitated face of his companion something

momentous, wheeled about and galloped with him, till the camp was out of sight.

For once the cool imperturbability of Don Augustin had deserted him.

"Name of God, Don José Antonio, but we have been fools!" he panted. "I know him now. He is none other than MacNamara—Padre MacNamara, to whom Pico gave the lands. By the God above, I swear it! I recognized him when he rode up, his head bared, his beard covered—those big eyes—that broad brow. Madre de Dios, it is surely, surely he!"

Arillo sat still, attentive, wordless. "Yes, yes," he finally admitted, "I believe thee. It is none other. Always have I known that I had seen him somewhere before."

Alvaro's words needed no other confirmation than the insistent, intangible, haunting memories that had come to the Don at every sight of Almagro's large, dark face and at the tones of his deep voice.

Not a word was spoken as the two men, bending over their saddles, galloped toward the city. The minds of both were busy with the same thought. The supposed Spaniard had been with them ever since the first attack on Gillie. They recalled a hundred corroborative incidents,—his participation in the attempt to murder the American prisoners; his attempt later to have

them sent to Mexico, an attempt that was frustrated only by the firm opposition of the two men now galloping toward the pueblo; his continual sounding in the ears of the Californians the tale of the greatness and glory of the British Empire. English sovereigns and guineas had been for many months circulating freely in the pueblo. MacNamara had ever been in close touch with Flores: he had had time to do much. What had he accomplished? Could it be that he and Flores were in a conspiracy to deliver California to England? Why otherwise had the British fleet lingered through the autumn months at Monterey and later at Santa Barbara?

Arriving at the house of Arillo, the two men at once sent couriers galloping with secret messages to every officer upon whom they could depend, warning them to slip away from the camp during the early hours of the night. But it was near midnight before they gathered, an anxious, excited group in the big room of the Arillo home.

In awestruck silence they listened while Don Augustin told his tale. Not one man doubted its truth, not one could be found who knew aught of Don Pablo de Almagro before his sudden appearance in the pueblo during the days of Gillie's rule. Every action of his since they had known him confirmed Alvaro's theory.

All eyes were turned on Don Andreas Pico,

upon whose presence Alvaro had insisted. What would his attitude be? For once in his fun-loving life there was no merriment in Pico's face. Rising to his feet, he said slowly:

"For some time have I suspected the man. Always has he boasted to me of the might and justice of England. But yesterday he vowed that if it was the English we were facing instead of the Americans, he would not fight. He was speaking of the English ships at Santa Barbara when we were interrupted. Whatever his aims, I do not believe there is any plot to which Flores is a party. Nor am I. I am not for England, though Pio was. I am for a free California. Now let us make sure before we accuse Flores. Let us ride at once to the powder house at San Gabriel, capture the man, and force from him the truth."

Without a dissenting voice, this plan was adopted, and Arillo, Alvaro, Pico, and a dozen others, angry and determined, were soon galloping through the night toward San Gabriel.

CHAPTER XXVI

"THE END IS NOW IN SIGHT"

HUGO VANUELA bent the lithe sword blade almost double, and smiled as the shiny strip of steel flashed back into place. His heavy mouth was grim, but it was plain that his thoughts were not unpleasant.

"Let us begin, Pedro," he suggested. "It is now some weeks since we have had a bout."

The middle-aged man seated on the bench by the door of the adobe, mending the cord on the handle of a rapier, glanced up at Hugo curiously.

"Jesus Maria, Hugo, my son, but thou art ever anxious for sword play. Well art thou aware that I have taught thee all I know. Even now thou art almost a match for me. Truly do I believe that with the rapier thou art the equal of any man in California."

Vanuela's eyes brightened with gratified pride.

"It is kind thou art to say so, my Pedro, yet it is but thy years that tell against thee. Easily and often canst thou touch me yet."

Pedro was still strong and erect, but his grizzled hair and wrinkled brow told of advancing years. At Hugo's words he ceased his work to gaze moodily at the bell tower of San Gabriel Mission Church, a few yards away. His thoughts were

of the far-off days when his had been the best blade in all the army of the king of Spain.

"Ay de mi," he sighed. "Yes, it is true; I grow old. Por Dios, so must it come to all of us, but," he shrugged his shoulders, "I have had my life,— battle and march, women and love and wine, rest and food. One must be content."

The two rolled up the sleeves of their sword arms and saluted. As if anxious to wipe from his memory Vanuela's words of a few moments before, Pedro took the offensive from the first. The years seemed to fall from him, and as he wheeled about his antagonist his agile movements had all the supple grace of a dancer.

Vanuela, purely on the defensive, the set, grim smile still on his face, hardly moved, meeting every pass and lunge with alert readiness. Pedro redoubled the fury of his attack, only to meet with the same impassable defense. As the fury of the veteran's sword play moderated, Vanuela, with a sudden movement of his wrist, sent the old man's sword whirling to the grass.

Pedro stood silent for a moment, his shoulders drooping pathetically. Then he walked back to the bench and resumed his seat.

"Señor Hugo Vanuela," he said impressively, "old as I am, thou art the only man in California can disarm me. I will fence no more with thee; thou art my master."

Vanuela stood silently cutting hissing circles in the air with the shimmering streak of steel. There was a look of deep meditation on his face. Pedro stared at him wonderingly.

"Why dost thou love it so, Don Hugo? For full seven years hast thou come to me, ever since thou wast a boy, and paid me for my teaching many a round piece of American gold. Why is it so? There is but little use for the sword in these days, even though there be war in the land. The bullet is everything; the good steel nothing—not as in the old days," he sighed. "Why dost thou love so the clatter of the rapiers, may I be permitted to ask? It is in truth the music of the past."

Vanuela's blue eyes contracted to mere slits. His brow clouded, and in the waning light his dark face looked almost diabolic.

"There is a man," he said slowly, "an enemy, that I would kill by the sword."

"Jesus, Jesus, that is it." The old man shuddered a little. "The good God pity him, whoever he be. If ever he meets thee with steel—as I live, the prayers of his patron saint will avail him nothing. And that fine sword of thine—there is none like it outside of old Spain."

"It was my father's sword," said Hugo gravely, as he buckled it on.

Bidding Pedro farewell, he vaulted to his

horse's back and with head bont in thought walked his steed past the slowly crumbling arches of the mission courtyard.

Truly, in the present condition of affairs, there was but little comfort for Hugo Vanuela. Never at any time had the outlook for the final success of the Californians been so promising. Neither the spectacular defeat of the Americans at Dominguez field, nor the fact that many of the Californian officers, among them Arillo and Alvaro, were now openly in favor of beginning peace negotiations with the Americans, had caused him much anxiety. But since the triumphant return of Don Andreas Pico, victorious from the field of San Pascual with the captured cannon, and the astounding news that the Californian lances had met the dreaded American soldiers from the mysterious east and defeated them, confidence reigned supreme among the insurgents. It was a confidence so enthusiastic and universal that even the cold temperament of Vanuela was impressed.

From the south came no news. Stockton was still at San Diego, afraid, Flores claimed, to face the long lances of the caballeros. Though Fremont was marching south, only half of his men were said to be mounted, and his progress, owing to the inclement weather, was painfully slow. Rumors, too, were flying thick and fast that the

war with the United States was ended, and that California was to remain a part of Mexico.

But the most portentous news of the last few days—news that had thrilled every Californian heart with joy and brought but troubled frowns to the face of Vanuela—was that the powder-making experiments at San Gabriel under the direction of MacNamara had proved a complete success. Altogether, the chances of the Americans returning victorious to the pueblo were becoming more and more remote.

Turning his horse at the mission church, Hugo trotted up the silent, dusty street to the powder house. The sentry at the door barred the way, but MacNamara, his face blackened and his hands sooty, came to the door and greeted him cheerily.

During the last few months the secret agent had been far from idle. In the pueblo he stood high. His commanding yet prepossessing personality, his little touch of the old-land accent, his knowledge of the great world beyond the seas, his never-failing courtesy, had proved a passport to the hearts and the homes of the people. In public gatherings his views were listened to with respect and attention.

All this was but part of the waiting game he was now playing. Already a trustworthy handful, who suspected if they did not know of his real

mission, had given him their promise of support when the time should come. And that that time would come—when the northward advance of Stockton would remind the Californian leaders that their lives would be forfeit, and when the American commander, whom MacNamara believed to be arrogant and relentless, would refuse to grant amnesty to the men of the broken paroles—he was absolutely certain. Face to face with the crowning indignity of a death on the scaffold, the leaders of the Californians would have no choice but an appeal to the British commodore.

Within the low, heavy-beamed room, a dozen Indian boys were engaged in grinding material in mortars. In the far corner Father Sanchez of the mission church was absorbed in the manipulation of a pair of scales. Bags of crude saltpeter and barrels of sulphur stood in the corners, while a long table was piled high with the burnt and blackened twigs of the willow.

"Is everything going well?" inquired Hugo.

"Most excellently, my worthy friend. Look at this." MacNamara reached into a covered box and fished out a handful of shining black grains.

It was with secret reluctance that the Englishman had taken charge of the powder-making experiments. He had no particular desire to see the Californians well equipped with a supply of

good powder. But the command of Flores had been peremptory. The manufacture of powder was, at that period, part of the training of every military officer, and of that fact Flores was well aware. The secret agent could find no good reason for refusal. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that if the course of events demanded it he could easily adulterate the mixture at the last moment. Even that might not be necessary. He was almost ready now to communicate with the commodore at Santa Barbara, and the moment the British marines arrived in the neighborhood of the pueblo he would see to it that the powder house and all that it contained were placed in their possession, to be used, if necessary, against the Californians themselves. This settled, his energetic nature soon lost itself in the joy of accomplishment.

"Friend Hugo," he said triumphantly, "not even in the armories of the king of Spain is better powder being made. Give my thy pistol, and come without."

He loaded, and fired at a tree a few yards away. A sharp, clean report, and the bark flew from the trunk in glistening white chips.

"So-o-o," remarked Vanuela. His eyes were half closed, but he was all attention. Behind his dark brow his brain was busy. He was face to face with a damning crisis in his plans.

"The trouble was," went on MacNamara, still full of his achievement, "that in the powder you used for the first shots at Dominguez there was too much sulphur and charcoal." He waved his hand toward the heap of blackened twigs on the table.

Vanuela stood drinking in every word, his eyes still half closed.

"Too much sulphur—too much charcoal. What effect has that on the powder?" he queried carelessly.

"It makes it slow to go off—much smoke and little force. They tell me the cannon balls simply rolled along the ground at Dominguez until the last shots, when they used the old powder."

Vanuela nodded confirmation.

"Then, too," continued the Englishman, "it is largely a matter of the right proportions." He reached down into a cask and drew out a handful of grayish dust. "Seventy-five parts of saltpeter, thirteen of charcoal, and twelve of sulphur. This mixture we dampen till somewhat moist. Then it is thoroughly kneaded. We then press it between these heavy weights, using this lever," he pointed to a huge beam weighted with rocks which ran the length of the room, "until the moisture is squeezed out. Then the hard material produced is again pulverized, and behold, we have powder, and good powder."

Vanuela's sleepy eyes were searching the room, and he whistled a few notes of a bugle call.

"This is sulphur," he laid his hand on the big box near him; "and this is powdered charcoal; and this is the correct mixture, ready to be wet."

He laid his hand on each as he spoke.

"So-o-o," he continued, "it seems simple, after all. Ah, my dear Almagro, we are indeed fortunate to have found you."

He looked amazed admiration into the other's face. MacNamara's eyes laughed back.

"How goes it in the pueblo?"

The words themselves were of no import, but the secret agent's sharp glance was full of meaning

"I have news." Vanuela's voice sank to a whisper. "Meet me—can you meet me here, say, at midnight?"

MacNamara frowned for a moment, and looked at Hugo questioningly.

"Why here?" he demanded. "Oh, well," he resumed quickly, "it is a quiet spot. I have access here at all times, and there is no chance of eavesdropping or interruption. There is always a guard at the door. I will dismiss him, and wait for you. Good, then I shall expect you—at midnight."

Vanuela rode away. On his sinister countenance was a look of vicious determination.

Through his mind ran the words of the Englishman the day he had revealed his plans and identity: "I would have killed you, my friend." Hugo chuckled audibly. "Those were thy words to me, Almagro."

It was nearing midnight when MacNamara, swathed in a heavy serape, for the December night was chill, stepped up to the sentry at the door of the powder house and remarked graciously:

"Pablo, my boy, you may if you wish go and sing a verse or two to your lady love. I will take your place till sunrise."

Directly Vanuela, who had been lurking behind the choir steps of the mission church, watching for MacNamara's arrival, sauntered in.

For the last three weeks the Englishman had been urging on him the supreme importance of haste in the matter of signatures to the petition addressed to the British commodore at Santa Barbara, asking him in no equivocal terms to declare a protectorate over California. MacNamara, after having been sharply reprimanded by Flores for his many absences from the powder house, had left the matter to Vanuela, who had been for days buoying him up with encouraging but false reports of the progress he was making.

"Have you the list, Hugo?" he questioned impatiently.

"I have." Vanuela fumbled in his clothing with his left hand. His right was hidden behind his back.

"Had you not better strike a light, that you may read the signatures?" Hugo suggested.

"A light in here?" snapped MacNamara. "Man, are you mad? Do you wish to be blown to the angels? You can tell me the names you have."

"I cannot remember them all," Hugo said hesitatingly. "Pico, Aguilar, Del Valle, Alvaro—"

"Alvaro!" There was startled incredulity in MacNamara's voice as he peered sharply at Vanuela. Alvaro he knew as the bosom friend of Arillo.

"Good," he remarked after a moment's pause. "Listen, friend Hugo; the time has come for action—for me to ride to Santa Barbara. I will show this paper to the commodore, but only to warn him that there is a movement among the Californians in favor of England, and show him my credentials. Later, when Stockton starts on his march north and when Flores begins to realize the uselessness of further resistance, I will point out to them their possible fate if Stockton insists on the application of the full penalty of military law in the matter of the paroles. Then we can double the number of the signatures. It will surely be unanimous. When that time comes, as

it surely will, I shall go again to Santa Barbara with the complete list and urge the commodore to hoist the British flag. This," tapping the papers in his hand, "will show the world that we have the consent of the Californians—that we are not, like the Americans, unwelcome conquerors. When I return the second time it will be as Captain Eugene MacNamara of her Majesty's Royal Marines.

"The main part of this work, the mixing of the ingredients, is now complete," he declared, as he laid his hand on the edge of the barrel by his side. "Father Sanchez and the boys can do the wetting and pressing as well as I. To-morrow at midnight I will start. Do thou tell them I have gone to San Pedro in search of more saltpeter. Ah, Hugo," he added triumphantly, "thou hast been a friend indeed. There will be place, power, and gold for thee under the new régime. It has been a long and hard road, but the end is now in sight."

"Yes," assented Vanuela slowly, "the end is now in sight."

For a moment he seemed pondering some problem.

"There is," he suggested "almost light enough at the window—the moonlight is very bright—to read the names or at least to note how many there are." Vanuela's tongue was moistening his dry

lips. In the hand held behind his back was a bright, metallic gleam.

The Englishman leaned toward the window, his head bent to one side, the paper held close to his face. His shoulder was turned toward Vanuela.

Slowly, deliberately, as if to make the surety of the thrust absolute, Vanuela raised his arm high above his head. For an instant, while the moonlight glittered on the broad blade, his eyes were fixed on the swelling cords of the other's throat. Then with a merciless downward sweep he drove the knife to the haft in MacNamara's neck.

The stricken man dropped the paper, his knees bent, and his mouth opened in a gasp. With a quick, certain movement Vanuela snatched the serape from the table and wound it around his head and mouth. The Englishman tottered backward, gurgling miserably and clutching at its smothering folds, while Vanuela bent over him, driving the blade again and again into his victim's neck and breast. Then his strong brown hands grasped and held the cloth-enwrapped head and writhing body until it sank still and silent to the floor.

Without unwinding the cloak, Vanuela's long fingers found the documents. As he wiped the bloodstained papers on MacNamara's garments, he murmured vengefully, "'I would have killed you, my friend.' Killed me, eh? So-o-o."

The man on the floor opened his eyes. The cloth had fallen from his blood-smeared face. He raised himself slightly on one arm. For an instant the moonlight glistened on his glassy, upturned eyeballs, and from his clotted beard came the words, "God—God—save England. God save—the—"

Like a tiger Vanuela was upon him. Again and again the knife found his throat, and the body fell back limp and breathless to the floor.

In an instant Vanuela was on his feet. He rushed to the boxes containing the sulphur and the charcoal and, grasping an earthenware vessel, dumped measure after measure of each into the cask containing the correctly proportioned mixture.

"Much smoke and little force," he muttered gleefully, as, reaching both arms deep into the cask, he stirred the contents to a semblance of consistency.

He led his horse silently away in the moonlight, and mounted behind a clump of sycamores.

"A fine man, truly, but I could use him no further. He had become troublesome. 'I would have killed you, my friend,'" he chuckled as he disappeared in the night.

A thundering clatter of hoofs by the mission church, and Arillo, Alvaro, Pico, and a dozen

others who had attended the secret meeting dashed up to the door of the powder house.

They found within, hacked to death by a hundred knife cuts and weltering in a pool of his own blood, the man whom they now knew to be Padre Eugene MacNamara.

Wonderingly, they bore him into the moonlight and laid his mangled form on the ground. Don Augustin alone seemed unmoved. He had never forgiven MacNamara for his attempt on the lives of Willard and his men. The silence was broken by the click of his snuffbox cover and his muttered comment: "The devil has claimed his own."

But the others crossed themselves, and shuddered.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TERROR OF THE SCAFFOLD

"STOCKTON has rejected your offer of peace, caballeros; he is determined to retake the pueblo."

The dusty, travel-stained courier was addressing the officers of the Californian army, assembled in a room of the Verdugo ranch house. He had just returned from an interview with the American commander, who, with his entire force, except a hundred men left as a garrison at San Diego, was now halfway between San Diego and Los Angeles.

Arillo, Alvaro, and Cota had at last succeeded in inducing their compatriots to make a tentative offer of peace. At the council of war held a week ago—a council that had lasted through twenty-four hours of wrangling—the majority had finally voted in favor of extending the olive branch to the advancing Americans. The courier had galloped south with a written communication from Flores to Stockton, a communication which suggested a complete suspension of hostilities, leaving the fate of California to be determined by the result of the war in Mexico. He was now presenting a report of his mission.

"Not for a moment would the American hearken to your suggestion, señores," went on the courier

in a troubled voice. "Por Dios, hardly was I treated with common courtesy."

In detail he related the incidents of the interview. Commodore Stockton had glanced hurriedly over the document, and then remarked contemptuously:

"Humph—signed by Flores—calls himself governor and military commandant of California. There is but one governor of California, and his name is not Flores. There is, however, a man of that name, a disgraced and dishonored rebel who has broken his parole. I will have him hanged when he falls into my hands. I suppose that is the fellow whose name is at the end of this scrawl."

As the courier concluded, there was silence in the little room. Every eye was turned on Flores, whose face blanched a little as he tugged at his mustache. But his voice was calm enough as he queried:

"Did he make any counter proposition, Don Domingo?"

"He did, señor. He stated that he would accept a surrender of our forces provided that we surrender to him, unconditionally, the person of our commandant and governor, Don José Maria Flores, to be tried for his life. Otherwise he will court-martial and hang all the caballeros who have broken their paroles, when he captures them."

Shocked and stunned by this revelation of the relentlessness of the American commander, the Dons sat for a moment in wordless silence. That any officer calling himself a gentleman and a Christian should manifest such a cold-blooded desire for vengeance was almost past belief.

Like a flash, anxiety and apprehension gave way to rage and indignation. The room burst into a babble of bitter ejaculations. Though the Californians had yielded to the arguments of Arillo and Cota, many of them were far from convinced of the hopelessness of their cause, but they had been sincere in their desire to avoid further bloodshed. The Americans had met their well-meant suggestion by a proposition so utterly insulting to honorable men that their blood boiled within them.

"God and his angels!" raged Cota, his fair face flushed with passion. "Does he think we are such craven cowards that we would save ourselves by consenting to the murder of our general? Thy answer, Don Domingo, thy answer!" he demanded vehemently.

Olivas had risen to his feet, all the pride of the *gente de razon* manifest in his bearing.

"To him I said that sooner would we die with Flores."

"Good! Good!" came in a unanimous chorus from all parts of the room.

"Jesus Maria! They are all alike, the Americans," commented Flores bitterly. "Gillie, Stockton, and Fremont who murdered the unarmed Berryessa boys—all of them. Strangers alike are they to honor, mercy, and good faith." But in his pale face there was a quiet heroism as he added, "Yet I place myself in your hands, *amigos*. Say but the word, and I will yield myself to the American."

"You shall not."

The words came like a pistol shot from the lips of Arillo. Between himself and the commandant there had ever been but little sympathy, but by none among the Dons had Stockton's offer been held a greater insult than by Don José Antonio.

"Por Dios, it is an honor to be so threatened by the commodore—an honor I had not anticipated," was Don Augustin's sarcastic comment, as he took a rather deliberate pinch of snuff.

Don Andreas Pico was giggling. "Friend Manuel," he said, turning to Garfias, "'tis said thou art one of the best dancers in the pueblo. Dost thou think thou couldst dance as well as usual on air? I wonder now, will there be music?"

Hugo Vanuela, seated in a corner, his chair tipped back, made no comment. He had earnestly supported Arillo and Cota in regard to sending the offer of peace to Stockton. He had reasons for

knowing what the American's answer would be. Though his sphinx-like countenance hid his emotions, his cruel heart was throbbing triumphantly as, with half-closed eyes, he lazily watched the Dons struggling in the meshes of the net his wily brain had woven.

It was exactly the contingency long foreseen by the shrewd mind of Eugene MacNamara. Hugo could not restrain a grin as he thought of the Englishman lying in his unmarked grave at San Gabriel.

"Por Dios, but he was clever," he soliloquized.

Don José Antonio was silent. There was anguish in his face, but it was not the anguish of fear. Not of himself was he thinking, as he stared unseeingly at the opposite wall. Before him arose, cruel in its vividness and deceptive promise, the mental picture of the evening in his own home when he had seen his daughter's eyes full of joy and love upraised to the flushed, happy face of John Carroll.

He was convinced of the utter hopelessness of the Californian cause; convinced, too, of the relentlessness of the American commander. Suddenly he drew himself up with a quick little shrug of resolution. His calm words expressed the unanimous sentiment of the meeting:

"We have no choice, evidently, but to fight—to fight to the end."

"What force has the American, Señor Olivas?" inquired the commandant.

"He has about five hundred men, all on foot, and armed with carbines and bayonets," responded the messenger. "They are marching in a hollow square inclosing about a hundred head of cattle and several wagons. The country being bare of herds, they slaughter their cattle for food as they are needed. I saw six cannon; there may be more. They are marching slowly on account of the cattle, making about ten miles a day."

"Caballeros," said Flores, rising to his feet, "marshal your divisions. We march at once to take up a position at the Jaboneria ford of the San Gabriel River. They will attempt to cross there to-morrow or the day after."

They lost no time. In half an hour the long lines of cavalry were trailing over the level plain toward the pueblo.

Don José Antonio, with Manuel by his side, rode slowly across the plaza toward his own home. Soberly his grave eyes rested on the figures of his wife and daughter. They stood on the veranda, waving their kerchiefs in joyous recognition, as the troops filed slowly past. Servolo Palera slowed his horse for a moment, and looked at the girl long and earnestly, his soul in his eyes. But she did not see him; her face was turned away,

toward her father and Manuel. Then his chin sank on his breast, and he rode on.

Seated within, Don José Antonio told them the story—the sending of the courier with the proffer of peace, and the determination of Stockton to take the uttermost vengeance for the broken paroles.

"My dear wife," he said, "I will be frank with thee. I fear we cannot defeat the Americans. In that case, the worst he threatens may come to pass."

The señora sat dazed, wordless, pale with horror. Manuel, standing by his father's chair, was weeping silently. Loreto, her hands on her heaving bosom, stared at Don José Antonio, incredulous terror in her eyes. Then with a low moan she threw her arms about him, and sobbed.

"Holy Mother, it cannot be! They would not —they could not—be so cruel."

At last the horrible significance of her husband's words penetrated the benumbed brain of Señora Arillo. Two large tears were slowly stealing down her cheeks.

"The robbers! The bandits!" she cried. "Oh, how happy we were before they came—and since, naught but tears and blood, grief and sorrow. And now this—this—"

Words failed her. Broken at last was the proud spirit of Señora Arillo. Her head sank on

the table, and her shoulders shook with heaving sobs.

Don José Antonio, his face ashen, his lips trembling, slowly released himself from his daughter's clinging arms and rose to his feet. Gravely he kissed his wife farewell and, as Loreto came again to his arms, he whispered in her ear:

"If the worst happens, be kind to him—as kind as you can. He is not to blame. Even now I know his heart is aching like ours."

On him the girl turned an indignant glance.

"Never, never, father. If—if it comes,"—she could not bring herself to say the shameful words—"to the end of my days shall I loathe all Americans with an undying hatred."

Don José Antonio seemed to be giving way under the ordeal. Suddenly his face changed. It grew firm, almost cheerful. To whom if not to him, the husband and the father, could these look for comfort in this hour of their tribulation? He must have courage for all.

"Do not grieve so," he said, as he laid his hand on the head of his weeping wife. "It is not yet ended. We may win. Or Stockton may relent, or—many things may happen. Be hopeful and pray—pray unceasingly to the Holy Mother to soften the hearts of our enemies, who to-morrow may be our conquerors."

A moment more of tender farewell, and he

strode from the room with a firm step and an almost debonair wave of his sombrero.

As Arillo and Manuel cantered down the street they noted Don Andreas Pico at the stockade gate, bidding farewell to Benito Willard. Pico was leading a beautiful white horse, saddled and bridled.

"My dear friend, Don Benito," Don Andreas was saying as Don José Antonio and Manuel, in response to his beckoning hand, halted at the gate, "you and your men are now free on parole. We must take away your guards. We are going to fight Stockton, and we need every man. Here is the best of my *blancos*. On his back you are perfectly safe. He can outdistance any horse in California. If I meet death in battle, do you give him to my brother Pio, who may possibly return after the war is over."

"Thank you, thank you, Don Andreas," replied Willard. "Now, my dear friend, do take care of yourself. With Stockton are some of Fremont's men of Gillie's company. They are dead shots. Don Andreas, and you, Don José Antonio, I beg of you, do not expose yourselves unnecessarily. It means certain death."

"I will remember, Don Benito. Thank you, my friend," replied Arillo gravely.

The emotional soul of Don Andreas was deeply touched by the earnest solicitude in the American's

voice. The teardrops hung heavy on his eyelashes, but the whimsical smile trembled on his lips as he bantered back:

"Bah, *no Andreas, y no mono.*"[1]

A horseman whirled up the street, and reined his horse in front of the group.

"The compliments of Commandant Flores," he said as he saluted. "The enemy have been sighted by our scouts ten miles to the east of the river. They have taken the Los Coyotes road to the north, and the commandant thinks they will attempt to cross the river at the Paso de Bartolo instead of the Jaboneria ford. We are to meet them there to-morrow. He urges that you rejoin the column at once."

Benito Willard, leaning on the silver-chased saddle of the *blanco*, gazed sadly after the disappearing horsemen.

"Damn war, anyway," he sighed wearily. "It sure is brutal business."

[1]No Andreas, and no monkey.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DREAM OF JOSE EL RUFO

JOSE awoke with a start. He was lying on a pallet of straw, staring at the small square of a barred window. He remembered now his midnight conference with Don Jesus Pico, the alarm at the door, the crash of splintering wood as it gave way before the musket butts of the Americans, the arrest of Pico and himself, and the march through the darkness to San Luis Obispo.

The boy drew his hand across his brow, tossing back the drooping lock of red, and the brooding melancholy deepened on his face. Forgotten was the calamitous end of his perilous ride, for with ever-increasing clearness the strange vision of his father had again come to him in the night. But this time, as had never happened before, the man had risen from the chair, and his lips had moved in speech.

The tramp of marching feet without, the thud of muskets on the soft sod, sharp military commands, and the boy, his dream forgotten, rushed to the window.

A few yards from the old mission of San Luis Obispo, Fremont's four hundred men were drawn up in three sides of a hollow square. At the

open end stood Angelo, Don Jesus Pico's Indian servant, his back against a low hill, his hands tied, and a serious, surprised expression on his stolid face.

Ten frontiersmen, rifles in hand, stepped out of the ranks and ranged themselves in line in front of the Indian. Their rifles leveled, and as the officer raised his sword and uttered a quick command, a simultaneous report rang out.

Angelo stiffened, whirled about, and fell forward on his face.

José, sick at heart, turned away from the window, and, sobbing bitterly, threw himself on his face on the cot. In the execution of Angelo he had seen his own approaching fate.

"Come, lad," said a rough but not unkindly voice at the door, "you are wanted now. The court-martial is about to begin. Keep a stiff upper lip. Mebbe it will come out all right."

Accompanied by the guard, José passed along the ruined portico of the mission and into a large room. The frontiersman motioned him to a seat near the door.

José, absorbed in thought, his eyes fixed on the floor, gave but scant attention to his surroundings. He was thinking of his home in the pueblo; of the veranda where he had been wont to sit with Manuel and Delfina; of the last day he had seen her at the river's edge, the day of the army's



return, when with love in her eyes she had almost begged him to return home. And now he was going to die and he would—

"José Arillo, stand up."

José rose to his feet, his eyes still on the floor.

"You are accused of being a spy in the service of the rebels. Are you guilty or not guilty?" It was the monotonous official voice of Lieutenant Somers, who was seated at the head of the table.

José raised his head and glanced toward the officers. Suddenly his eyes lit on Somers. A strange change came over the boy's countenance. Vanished instantly was the expression of dread. Though the unshed tears still glistened on his lashes, a happy, peaceful smile wreathed his mouth. For a moment he swayed slightly. Then with arms bent at the elbows, hands and fingers relaxed, his head thrust slightly to the front, he stepped quickly forward, the fixed, unseeing look of the somnambulist on his face.

Softly, so softly that no one in the room could hear a sound, he crept on, placing one foot before the other with the utmost caution.

"Here, lad, you come back! They don't want you over there," ordered the startled guard.

José was halfway down the room now, creeping forward with his slow, noiseless step.

"God a'mighty, look at Somers!" gasped a frontiersman.

The lieutenant was on his feet, bending forward, his hands on the table, his eyes wide open in a wondering stare.

The room was silent, a silence tense and oppressive, as, motionless, all stared at the two figures, José tiptoeing forward, steadily, surely, noiselessly; Lieutenant Somers, his face pale, his form rigid as a statue. In the very air was the chill of something mysterious, something uncanny. The breathing of the men could be heard in the hushed stillness.

For José had seen before him, in the ruddy head of Lieutenant Somers, outlined against the flag on the wall, his familiar vision of the night.

"Heavens!" whispered the guard. "Look at them! Them two look as much alike—" A warning touch on the arm struck him silent.

José, his eyes still riveted on Somers, reached the table, and as his outstretched hands touched it there burst from his lips, in a glad triumphant cry, a cry that was half a joyous scream, his one English word: "Father!"

Then his figure went limp; his eyes closed. He tottered, and would have fallen to the floor had not one of the officers caught him and laid him gently on a bench.

Tenderly they bore him to his cot, and though the doctor worked over him for an hour, repeated shakings and the application of stimulants failed

to awaken him. He sank back limp, but on his curving lips was a smile of ineffable content.

Through the afternoon and into the night José slept, a sleep apparently of utter exhaustion. Hour after hour in the darkness of the cell Somers sat and waited, his soul torn with hope and fear.

Could this be his son—his little son—the prattling youngster of four with his mother's gray eyes, the boy whom he had believed dead, killed fourteen years before in an earthquake in Valparaiso, Chile? From the ruins they had taken the mangled form of his mother, but no trace of the child had ever been found. For days, for weeks, the broken-hearted man had haunted the spot, only in the end to relinquish all hope.

It was nearing midnight. The boy on the cot stirred restlessly. Somers stole to the bedside, and stared down at the motionless figure. The moonlight falling aslant through the barred window fell on the lad's uncovered eyes. He sighed, and moved his head; hurriedly the man retreated to the darkness of the corner.

Burning with impatience, he could wait no longer.

"Boy," he asked softly, "what is your name, your real name?"

"José el Rufo, they call me," came from the cot in sleepy tones, "but I am José Arillo. My real

name—I—know—not." The voice trailed away into sleep.

"Is Arillo your father?" again came the voice from the corner.

The boy sat slowly upright, leaning on one arm.

"No; Don José Antonio is not my father. My real father—I do not know his name. But I have seen him often."

In the dreamy monotonous tone of the somnambulist, the boy's voice rambled on, telling the story of his strange dreams, the memories of his parents, the narrow street where the laden donkeys went up and down, the sudden night of terror, his wanderings with the Indians. Sitting erect on the cot, José was still dreaming, dreaming that he was telling the tale to Manuel, as he had done a thousand times.

A half sigh, half sob came from the corner; then a clicking of flint. Somers lighted the candle, and waited.

José, his eyes wide open, stared at him. Yes, he was dreaming again. That was his father, seated by the candle light, but—it was strange—there was no table, no flag behind his head.

Rising slowly to his feet, the boy stared at Somers for a moment. Then he crept stealthily toward the trembling man. Somers sprang up, rushed to him, threw his arms about him, and crushed him to his breast.

"My son! My son!" he sobbed.

José, the hypnotic look still on his face, yielded to the embrace. He was marveling at the strangeness of the vision. Never before had dream been so vivid as this. He placed his hand on the man's shoulder, and drew back from him a space.

"Art thou—thou—my father?" There was a world of doubt and awe in his tones. "What is thy—what is my name? Who am I?"

"As God lives, I believe you to be my son. Your name is Joseph Franklin Somers."

"Joseph—Franklin—Somers," the boy repeated incredulously. Then his gaze wandered around the dim-lit room, at the figure of the man before him, at his own arms and feet. How real it all seemed! The troubled, puzzled look came again to his face. Oh, if he could only know, if there were some way to know whether or not this were but another dream!

The boy's arm shot out. Snatching the candle from the table, he resolutely applied the flame to the fingers of his other hand.

Somers felt a wild thrill of fear. Had the boy gone mad? He sprang forward, and wrested the candle from under the blackening fingers.

But the small red flame had done its work. Jose's stinging finger ends had told him that he was in truth awake.

"Oh!" he shouted boisterously, "it is real! It

is true! It is no dream! Fatner! My father! I know you are real—real—real!" He was pounding Somers on the shoulder in a wild paroxysm of joy. "This time I shall not wake—I shall not wake!"

The candle, fallen to the floor, flickered for a moment, and died. Somers sat silent in the darkness, José's face against his cheek, his arms about his son.

Morning dawned, the morning Don Jesus Pico was to die. The frontiersmen of Fremont's command openly exulted in his coming fate. Had he not broken his parole of honor, bringing war to a land that was at peace? Had it not been he—he and his friends—who had caused this weary, wintry march, a march of shivering nights and toiling, rain-drenched days? Was he not responsible for the bloodshed at Dominguez and San Pascual,—he and the others whom Stockton and Kearney would doubtless hang when they fell into their hands? It was right and just that "Tortoi" Pico should die.

Down the corridor of the mission came a veiled woman, a child in her arms and two others clinging to her skirts. The guard at the door of Colonel Fremont's headquarters, half dozing, allowed her to enter.

Fremont, seated at a table, pen in hand, looked

up at the intrusion. He was a spare man, with sharp, clear-cut features and a ragged beard. His eyes—wonderful eyes they were, dark and brilliant, strong and penetrating—stared inquiringly at the visitors.

As he stepped toward them the woman fell to her knees and threw her arms about his mud-stained leggings.

"Oh, señor, do not kill him! I beg of you, do not kill him! He did not know he was committing such a crime. He was but ashamed to stay at home when the other *hijos del pais* went to fight for the land. Do not kill him!"

Fremont's brow was wrinkled in perplexity; his splendid eyes were troubled. The children joined their shrill voices to their mother's wails.

"Oh, señor," she pleaded "will you make these little ones fatherless? Oh, have pity, señor, have pity!"

But there was no sign of relenting in the colonel's face as he lifted the weeping woman to her feet.

"Señora," he said in an even voice, "I can make no promises, nor hold out any false hopes. Go home and remain there quietly. I will notify you of my decision, before anything is done."

As Captain Owens, one of Fremont's staff, closed the door behind them, the colonel drew his hand across his sweat-bedewed brow.

"God, Owens, this is awful. Sooner would I

meet a thousand of them with arms in their hands than one weeping woman."

Lieutenant Somers entered the room. They both stared at him in wonder. Was this the somber man at whose melancholy mien they had marveled since first they knew him? On his lips was a happy smile, and in his eye a sparkle as of youth regained.

Fremont walked back and forth across the room with his quick, nervous step. Only an hour ago he had received dispatches from Stockton in which the commodore expressed a hope of the capture of Don Jesus Pico.

But the kindly heart of the Pathfinder had been touched by the sight of the weeping woman and the clinging children. And the dispatch bearer who had secretly entered their lines in the night, was a son of his trusted officer. For him he had issued a pardon at once.

"Pico's execution is set for ten o'clock, colonel," said Owens. "It lacks but five minutes now. Be lenient, colonel, if it is possible," he pleaded.

Fremont walked to the window and, his hands in his pockets, stood motionless for a few moments, gazing at his men drawn up in readiness for the execution.

"Bring Pico to me. Then leave us alone," he ordered.

The cousin of Don Andreas was a dark, slight

man, with the mien of a born aristocrat. Though his face was gray and haggard, he was of the Pico stock, and there was no sign of flinching in his steady gaze as he looked into the eyes of the Pathfinder.

The American pointed out the window to the troops on parade, and asked in a harsh tone, "Don Jesus Pico, do you know what that means?"

"It means"— there was little tremor in Pico's voice —"that I am about to die."

Through the open window came the careless laughter of the frontiersmen; then the door opened and a voice said, "Corporal's guard for the prisoner, colonel; it is ten o'clock."

Fremont was still staring out the window. Deathlike was the silence in the room, save for the nervous tapping of the Pathfinder's fingers on the window ledge.

Slowly he turned, his eyes again meeting Pico's fairly. He seemed to be waiting.

The bearded lips of the Californian trembled slightly, but he was silent. The pride of the Picos was his; he could not beg for his life.

"Don Jesus," Fremont said, whimsically, "you are a brave man; you are almost as brave as you are lucky in having such a wife. Go thank her— she has saved you."

First white, then joyous crimson went the face of Don Jesus. He reeled slightly, then falling

on his knees he crossed his forefingers high above his head.

"I was to die," he said, in a voice quivering with emotion. "I had lost the life God gave me. You have given me another. My new life I devote to you—by this cross I swear it."

CHAPTER XXIX

AT THE "PASO DE BARTOLO"

AT the ford of the San Gabriel River known as the Paso de Bartolo, ten miles from Los Angeles, the Californians were awaiting the coming of Stockton.

The stream, swollen full and wide by recent rains, lay below them about five hundred yards away, both banks fringed by a heavy growth of underbrush. Beyond the river the road, for the possession of which Castilian and American were to battle that fateful 8th of January, 1847, sloped gently down to the water's edge. On the Californian side a bluff swept in a long bow-like curve away from the stream, inclosing within its curving arms a little plain. Reappearing at the water's edge, the trail shot across the crescent-shaped flat, and climbed the hill at the middle point of the curve, exactly in the center of the Californian position.

"They are coming, father; I can see them." Manuel Arillo rose excitedly in his stirrups, and pointed to a black smudge in the distance.

"Look, father, over there."

Don José nodded and, sighing deeply, turned away to speak with an aide of Flores who had cantered up with orders.

Steadily, as if on parade, the Americans advanced down the long slope. As Olivas, the courier, had reported, they were all on foot, marching in a square, the cattle and the wagons in the center, the cannon at the corners. Stockton's attempts to secure mounts for his men had proved unsuccessful. The strategy of Flores had swept the land almost clear of both horses and cattle.

Quickly Flores placed his troops in position. Directly across the road, as it topped the concave height, were set Arillo's four guns, to the right the squadron of Don Manuel Garfias, to the left Don Andreas Pico with his veterans of the San Pascual campaign. Hugo Vanuela and his company of Indians were ordered to cross the river and conceal themselves in the shrubbery at the water's edge.

The slowly moving square, with its center of tossing horned heads, halted a half-mile from the stream. From the sides of the square broke out, in groups of twos and threes, fifty ununiformed men. Hastily falling into a skirmish line, ten paces apart, they strode on toward the river. Far beyond the range of the escopetas were they when Vanuela whispered to his lieutenant. The latter stared his amazement, but after a moment's hesitation gave the order to fire.

The straggling line of bushes by the water burst into smoke, but not for a moment did the frontiersmen hesitate. Contemptuously ignoring the escopeta bullets, plowing up the sod in front of them, they swung on in a long, steady stride. Hurriedly Vanuela and his skirmishers vacated the shrubbery and retreated across the stream.

On to the water's edge swept Kit Carson and his men, among them Jim Marshall. Lost to sight were they for a moment as they broke through the bushes. Then, wading boldly into the stream, they pressed on, the current rippling about their chins, their rifles held high above their heads.

Halfway across were they when the crash of the Californian cannon broke the stillness. The surface of the stream, torn with grapeshot, showered the struggling skirmishers with blinding spray. But not a man fell. Unfalteringly they pressed on, dragged themselves out of the stream, and took cover under a wave-bitten bank close to the water's edge.

"Por Dios, but that was magnificent," murmured Don Augustin, as he dipped into his snuff-box. "Ah," he sighed, "that their commander were as generous as his men are brave!"

From the bank below, the rifles of the frontiersmen were popping irregularly, but without effect. Knowing well their deadly marksmanship, Flores

had not been taken unawares. Even before the line had scrambled out of the water, the Californian cannon had been withdrawn a few yards, while the mounted squadrons retreated from the edge of the bluff, till even the heads of the horses were hidden by the curve of the hill.

From beyond the river came a reverberating roar. Two of Stockton's cannon at the edge of the stream were thundering out a response to Arillo's fire. A few yards up the slope the square waited. The skirmishers, lying on the sandy beach beneath the bank, could hear above them the shrill screech of the missiles as the Californian guns boomed back defiantly.

Marshall grinned as he noted the Californian grapeshot falling into the water with a plumping sound.

"Not kick enough to them cannon. Not enough powder," he commented to Kit Carson, lying on the sand beside him. "Jehosophat, but Arillo is doing poor shooting. He did better than that at Dominguez."

Confusion and hesitation were apparent among the Americans on the far bank. Their cannonade had ceased, though the enemy's guns were still booming. General Kearney, his face grave with apprehension, strode over to Stockton.

"The river bed is full of quicksand, commodore," he announced.

"Damn the quicksand! Go ahead! Carson's men did it," Stockton snapped back.

In a moment the water was full of struggling men, tugging at the cannon ropes, stopping every now and then to wrest their feet from the clutching sands or to assist a sinking comrade.

Over them roared the artillery duel. Arillo was getting the range. Many of his shots were dropping among the confused mass of toiling, half-submerged Americans; but they seemed strangely ineffectual. Here and there a sailor, bruised or stunned by the grapeshot, was carried senseless to the bank or laid on a baggage cart. The two other American guns, still roaring from the bank, were firing as many shots as Arillo's four.

Near to Arillo's battery Hugo Vanuela, leaning on his saddle, was watching curiously the effect of the Californian fire. The near half of the stream, whipped into a cloud of foam at every discharge, told that most of the shots were falling short. Hugo grinned complacently. The powder was fulfilling all his expectations for inefficiency. Well, indeed, had he done his work in the few short moments after his bloody knife had sent Eugene MacNamara to meet his God. The Americans, he meditated, could refuse him nothing when, in the days to come, they learned the truth.

With an earth-shaking roar, the six American

guns, now safely across the river, thundered out simultaneously. The horses of the gun crew on the bluff above tumbled over in a bleeding heap. Quickly the Californians cut the riatas and, substituting other horses, whisked their cannon back. Two of the gun crew lay dead on the ground.

The cattle, bellowing in terror and urged on by the shouting Americans, were slowly drawing out of the water. Still stuck in the middle of the river were the baggage wagons, around them a group of shouting, excited sailors.

Arillo's cannon, reloaded, were again shot forward to the edge of the incline. At the brink of the stream Stockton himself, just emerging from the water, glanced up and caught sight of them.

"Stand aside," he ordered the marine. Bending over the piece, the commodore sighted it and applied the linstock. Into a thousand splinters flew the wooden carriage of one of the cannons on the bluff; the gun itself reared wildly on end, and then tumbled helplessly to the ground.

By the water's edge all was confusion and disarray. To hold the wild range cattle in a compact mass and to reform the square about them was no easy task. Amidst the roars of the frenzied beasts, the ineffectual popping of the rifles, the shouts of the excited sailors, moved Lieutenant John Carroll. With Captain Gillie, he was

man, with the mien of a born aristocrat. Though his face was gray and haggard, he was of the Pico stock, and there was no sign of flinching in his steady gaze as he looked into the eyes of the Pathfinder.

The American pointed out the window to the troops on parade, and asked in a harsh tone, "Don Jesus Pico, do you know what that means?"

"It means"— there was little tremor in Pico's voice —"that I am about to die."

Through the open window came the careless laughter of the frontiersmen; then the door opened and a voice said, "Corporal's guard for the prisoner, colonel; it is ten o'clock."

Fremont was still staring out the window. Deathlike was the silence in the room, save for the nervous tapping of the Pathfinder's fingers on the window ledge.

Slowly he turned, his eyes again meeting Pico's fairly. He seemed to be waiting.

The bearded lips of the Californian trembled slightly, but he was silent. The pride of the Picos was his; he could not beg for his life.

"Don Jesus," Fremont said, whimsically, "you are a brave man; you are almost as brave as you are lucky in having such a wife. Go thank her— she has saved you."

First white, then joyous crimson went the face of Don Jesus. He reeled slightly, then falling

on his knees he crossed his forefingers high above his head.

"I was to die," he said, in a voice quivering with emotion. "I had lost the life God gave me. You have given me another. My new life I devote to you—by this cross I swear it."

The Americans were cheering deliriously, the hoarse, throaty shout of the Anglo-Saxon. They had met a Californian charge led by the dashing Pico himself, and repelled it.

Gathering his officers about him, Commandant Flores gave orders for a general assault—a final effort that would decide the day.

"Don Manuel, you take them on the left; Don Andreas, on the right, as before; Captain Vanuela, you will charge with your company directly down the road."

There was no confusion now among the Americans. The steel-tipped square was advancing slowly, step by step, across the little flat, along the road toward the very center of the Californian position. Every man was in place, every piece primed and loaded.

Like two wide, encircling arms, the squadrons of Garfias and Pico crept slowly down the slopes on the right and left. As they reached the level ground their pace increased to a trot. Vanuela whispered to his lieutenant, who went quietly to the rear of the company. Francisco Cota, the Mexican flag over his shoulder, trotted up and took his place by Vanuela's side at the head of the column.

The square had halted. All of the six guns had been whirled about, and their gaping muzzles were pointed full on Vanuela's company. The

gunners, linstock in hand, stood awaiting the word of command.

With reckless bravery, Cota dashed down the slope, waving the flag above his head. "Come on, *muchachos!*" he shouted.

Suddenly he reined his horse. His ear missed the sound of hoofbeats behind him. Turning his head, he was amazed to find that he was alone, that Vanuela's company had halted halfway down the slope. For a moment he hesitated, then trotted back up the trail, indignant surprise showing in his face as he stared inquiringly at Hugo.

Below, on the flat, the commands of Pico and Garfias had halted in their mad career. The officers, catching sight of the retreating colors, hesitated; but a few horsemen dashed on. Others held back, shouting warnings. Their formation was lost, the fronts of both lines thrown into confusion.

At that moment the leveled rifles on both sides of the square again volleyed smoke and flame. But the range was far, the marksmanship of the sailors bad. Puzzled and disheartened at the apparent change in their commander's plans, the two squadrons of cavalry scrambled back to the top of the bluff.

"Why didst thou turn back, Chito?" inquired Flores.

"I but turned to see why the company was not advancing," Cota replied with proud dignity. Again he stared at Vanuela meaningly.

"Do not misunderstand, Chito," said Flores. "No one doubts thy courage. Why did you not advance, Señor Vanuela?" he demanded of Hugo.

Vanuela shrugged his shoulders.

"For fifty men," he responded coolly, "to charge with lances a square where six loaded cannon awaited them would not be war; it would be murder or suicide, which you will. Yet would I have charged the square as soon as the cannon were fired, and Pico and Garfias had struck the line. Then in the confusion my men would have been of assistance. That the squadrons did not charge is not my fault."

No time was there for further recrimination or explanation. The battle had been lost almost by default. The Californians had failed to take advantage of the crucial moment. Already the square was moving in its deliberate way up the slope of the bluff.

Hurriedly the Californians withdrew their guns and trailed across the plain to the foot of the hills, where they made camp in full sight of the enemy. But two Californians and one American had given their lives in the day's engagement, while eight wounded sailors lay groaning on Stockton's baggage wagons.

Slowly the sun sank in a blaze of molten glory. From Stockton's camp on the edge of the bluff, above the river, came a burst of throbbing music. The military band was playing the "Star-Spangled Banner."

With strangely mingled emotions the Californians, ever lovers of melody, listened to the thrilling measures floating to them through the deepening dusk. Though the triumphant strains proclaimed their own disheartening defeat, every horseman, sitting attentive and motionless in his saddle, was gravely appreciative.

"Por Dios, but that is beautiful—beautiful," murmured Servolo Palera. "It is also a song; I have heard Gillie's men sing it in the pueblo last summer. Knowest thou its title, Don Augustin?"

"Yes," responded Alvaro with a little sigh. "Juan Carroll has told me of it. It is the war song of the Americans. It is called," he hesitated as if seeking for the proper words, "it is called, 'the flag with the bright stars scattered over it.'"

Servolo was silent for a moment. In his somber eyes was a strange, unearthly light, as of one looking down a long vista of years.

"Dios de mi alma," he sighed, "perhaps it may be in the distant days to come that our children's children, forgetful of us, may sing it as their very own."

The music ended. The American bugle blew "taps." Over the wide, rolling plain, the river gorge, the low-lying hills, darkness lowered. Palera, riding on the picket line between the two forces, noted the American camp fires breaking out one by one on the edge of the river bluff. From the heights a mile away the quivering points of flame that marked the Californian camp twinkled back in cheery response.

Servolo was alone in the shrouding darkness of the plain. Seated in his saddle, he reverently bared his head, and gazed up at the star-lit infinity.

"Mary, Mother of Sorrows," he prayed, "ask thy Son to take me to Himself, if I be worthy. I care not to live—my country conquered, my heart dead within, my friend Ignacio gone before. Oh, Father, if it be Thy will, let me go to him and to Thee. My soul is shriven. I am ready to die."

CHAPTER XXX

THE LAST STAND OF THE CABALLERO

THROUGH the morning mist rippled the reveille from Stockton's bugles. The sailors and frontiersmen, chilled and grumbling, crept from their dew-soaked blankets and hastily snatched a scanty meal.

Before the sun had lifted above the eastern hills, the square was again moving steadily on toward Los Angeles. Slow and weary was the progress of the little army, their pace set by the lean and hungry cattle, but little refreshed by their night's foraging. Around the command, as it crept on at a snail's pace over the level, treeless plain, hovered groups of mounted Californians, well out of rifle range. The main body of the enemy was nowhere in sight.

As the sun climbed higher, its cheering rays drying the clothing and warming the chilled bodies of the men, their good humor returned and they beguiled the tedium of the march with jest and laughter. They were in high spirits. Yesterday they had beaten the enemy, and taken full revenge for San Pascual. To-night the rebellious pueblo of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels would be theirs.

The afternoon was well advanced before the

white walls of the town, set low in the green stretch of river bottom, lifted into view. The sailors in the square, three deep around the cattle and the wagons, were gazing curiously at the end of their long march when Jim Marshall, who had been marching with the skirmishers some distance ahead of the command, hurried back.

"The enemy is in sight, sir," he announced to Stockton, "over there to the right in a hollow."

"Give orders to load with ball and three buckshot," the commodore commanded. For a few moments the square halted until muskets and rifles were charged

Lieutenant Carroll, on the right of the column, turned his glass toward the sycamores in the hollow. He could see the entire Californian force ranged in a semicircle, facing a mounted officer, who, sombrero in hand, was addressing them vigorously. Softened by distance, the speaker's voice came to the Americans as a low murmur.

"That's Flores, I suppose," remarked Stockton, as he handed the glass to Gillie. "He is trying to stir them up to make another stand after their drubbing yesterday at the river. We will march right on. We are not going to chase him, much as he would like it. We are going right on to the pueblo."

"No," responded Gillie, the glass still at his eye, "that is not Flores; it is some one else."

The captain was right. The orator who, with graceful gestures and impassioned words, was speaking to the listening Californians was Servolo Palera. To the disheartened men he was making an appeal for a final effort.

"Men, brothers, Californians," he was saying, "yesterday for two long hours you fought the enemy, believing them to be soldiers. To-day we know them to be but sailors.

"Yesterday, you with your few guns and miserable powder held them in check at the river for two hours. To-day we will face them on the level mesa, where, in one mighty charge, we can break their lines and have them at the mercy of our lances. Four times already have you met them; three times have you defeated them. How can you hesitate?

"Men of Spanish blood, remember the deeds of your fathers. Make not their spirits, who are even now looking down upon us from their home above, ashamed of their sons.

"Think, brothers, of the days to come. Shall the tale be told that we, four hundred strong, waited idly here while the Americans, no greater in numbers, without horses, marched unharmed and unhindered into our beloved pueblo?

"We shall win. God is with us. Let us crush them, and capture Commodore Stockton. Never shall the tale be told to our children's children

that we, their fathers, failed—failed them at the last. For the sake of the weeping women yonder in the pueblo, for this land your fathers won by the sword, for the soil that holds their sacred bones, for your tongue, for your faith,—in God's name, strike but one more blow. Whether life or death, victory or defeat await us on yonder plain, let us do our duty like men.

"Sing, friends, sing!" He threw up his arms, wide apart, and his rich tenor voice broke forth:

"Our pulses thrill at the wondrous tale
Of their deeds in the days of old.
Oh! can it be our cheeks grow pale,
Our hearts grow weak and cold?

"Shall strangers rule our fathers' land,
In sorrow, grief, and pain?
Oh! face once more their robber band,
Ye Sons of Ancient Spain."

Every sombrero was raised wildly aloft; every lance shaft waved frantically; from every Californian throat came a yell of defiance. Moved by the pathetic wistfulness in his somber, youthful face, thrilled by his impassioned words, touched to the heart by his appeal to their pride of race, their momentary depression vanished and they threw their voices full pitched into the chorus.

"There's that same old song," commented Gillie as the distant rhythm of the singing drifted across the plain. "Some kind of hymn, I suppose."

Lieutenant Carroll, trudging by his side, made no answer. His face was drawn and tired, his heart anxious; he dreaded the events of the morrow. Fondly had he hoped that yesterday's skirmish at the river had marked the end of hostilities, but again he was to face in a death struggle the men whose nobility of soul had compelled his admiration.

But the soldier in him brought him up with a sharp turn. He must remember that the Californians were his enemies, the enemies of his country. Arillo his enemy, Servolo his enemy, Alvaro his enemy? He sighed wearily.

Marshall, at his elbow, looked at his friend sympathetically.

"Tired, lieutenant?"

"No, Jim, just thinking."

"Now, lieutenant," whispered Marshall, "jest you quit worryin'. The commodore ain't goin' to do no hangin' business. If he tries it, General Kearney won't let him. Them two has been fightin' ever since we left San Diego. When generals fight, plain folks get their dues."

"Jim, Jim," warned Carroll, "you must n't talk about that."

"All right, lieutenant, all right. Jehosophat," he went on in a still lower tone, "but this is the finest country! Do you know, it seems to me that the sunny, summer morning that the Lord

made California he didn't do anything else that day but jest lie around feeling good over it? As soon as ever I kin git out of the army I am goin' to buy me that rancho and that white hoss I was tellin' you about. I got the coin right over in the pueblo, all right."

In spite of his somber thoughts, Carroll was amused. Marshall was generally a truthful man, save when he touched upon the one matter of his wealth; then he overflowed with braggadocio. Jim had never shown any great wealth of coin.

"When we onct gets settled down in the pueblo," he continued, "I got the dingdest piece of news, something no one but Jim Marshall knows, to tell you. But when the time comes I'll send it richochetting around the world. But no one but you and me's goin' to know it till it is a dead sure thing that this country belongs to Uncle Sam, then—"

His voice was drowned in the roar of the Californian cannon from the brink of the depression.

Their aim was good. A mule attached to one of the field pieces at the forward corner of the square, shot through the body, was struggling frantically, throwing the other animals into the wildest confusion. Another ball of white in the hollow, and a sailor near Marshall, badly wounded, pitched sidewise under the crowding feet of the

cattle. For a few moments the square halted while the mule was exchanged and the dying sailor placed on one of the carts. Then the stubborn, plodding march was resumed. The lesson of San Pascual had not been lost on Commodore Stockton; nothing would tempt him to abandon his square formation or falter in his march on the pueblo.

Out of the hollow whirled two of the enemy's cannon, bounding along at the ends of the riatas. They took up a position directly across the American line of march.

"That's Don José Antonio—there in front," said Marshall, "there on the big bay horse."

The guns left in the hollow roared again, but the shot went screeching harmlessly over the heads of the Americans. Then Arillo's guns in front joined in the tumult. One of the round shot, skipping along the ground, rebounded into the square, knocking down several men. They staggered to their feet, bruised and breathless, and dazed with astonishment to find themselves still alive.

"Cheer up, Hans," remarked Marshall, as he helped one of them into a cart, "you have no hurt but a few broken ribs. It takes more than a little thing like a cannon ball to kill a Dutchman. You have to prove it to a Dutchman he is dead before he will die."

Stubbornly the square plodded on, the men fretting and fuming. Were they to creep along all day, a target for the cannon of the enemy? Under the strain of the artillery fire, they were becoming nervous and apprehensive.

The guns in the hollow, one of them the howitzer captured from Kearney at San Pascual, did better the next shot. A wild commotion among the cattle, and a shriek of agony from the far side of the square, told that the enemy again had the range.

"Halt!" the command ran around the square.

Quickly the forward American guns were unlimbered, turned on the depression, and roared forth their response, the thunder of their reports mingling with the sharper boom of Arillo's cannon in front. When the smoke had cleared away, the guns at the brink of the hollow and their defenders had disappeared.

The cannon returned to their place at the forward corners of the square, and the Americans resumed their slow march. Out of the hollow rode the entire body of the Californians. Describing a wide curve well out of range of the American rifles, they took up a position in front of Arillo's battery, directly across the road leading to the pueblo. There was no mistaking the meaning of the maneuver; the artillery duel was to become a pitched battle.

The Americans broke into a cheer, the heavy hurrah of the sailors mingling with the sharp Indian-like yells of the frontiersmen. Gleefully they looked to the priming of their pieces. The enemy was going to fight—a real "stand up" fight.

Along the front of the Californian line officers were galloping, shouting sharp commands as they placed their men in position. A short distance behind them, a body of vaqueros led several hundred extra horses.

Never again will the blue California sky look down upon such a scene as that of the afternoon of that ever-to-be-remembered day of January 9, 1847. It was a spectacle, magnificent, majestic, thrilling, of its kind the last on the west coast of North America.

Slowly, at a walk, the line of horsemen advanced, above them a forest of slender lance shafts, tipped with gaudy pennons. Here and there fluttered flags of gorgeous hues—flags woven by the fingers of the devoted women of the pueblo. Sharply glittered the rays of the declining sun on the naked sword blades of the officers, the steel of the lance points, the silver mountings of saddle, bit, and bridle.

Brilliant with the gay colors of the gaudy serapes, undulating with the tossing manes of the mettlesome horses, the whole line palpitated with

life and motion. They were singing wild and shrill the war song of Palera, their voices mingling with the tinkle of the many guitars, and the stirring strains of the bugles.

More than one brave heart beneath the proudly fluttering pennons knew full well the hopelessness of their cause, knew that not only defeat but perchance the disgraceful death of a felon awaited them at the hands of their foes. But there was no flinching and no faltering.

The spirit of the ancient Roman, the spirit of the conquering Goth, the spirit that after seven hundred years of struggle had driven the Moor back to his African hills, the spirit of the *conquistadores* of Cortéz was theirs. The gods of war might have abandoned them, but in this, the last stand of the caballero, naught would there be lacking of the proud panoply of martial array. If fate had so willed that they must go down to defeat, they would go with flags proudly afloat, with a song and a smile on their lips, with the unbending dignity of their race.

"Jehosophat," remarked Marshall, as the Americans waited in silence, "if that does n't remind me of a circus parade back in old New Jersey."

Flores, riding in front of the Californians, threw up his hand. The advancing line broke in the center, each half describing a wide curve to

the right and left. As they swung around, their pace quickened to a trot. The singing ceased, and with a piercing, simultaneous yell down came the lances, and the two divisions charged, full tilt, both sides of the square.

Against the charging squadrons burst the thundering crash of musketry. Both sides of the square bristled with living streaks of fire. The sky, the plain, the distant hills, the oncoming wave of horsemen were blotted out by the billowing smoke.

On the Californian side one man drew out of the smoke cloud and with a grim smile listened to the roar of battle. He, and he alone, knew why, on that broad mesa by the Pueblo of the Angels, a thousand men, with the lust of killing hot in their hearts, were seeking one another's lives. It was the work of his cunning brain. He, and he alone, was the war maker.

Slowly the smoke cleared. The entire front of the Californian line was in confusion, a mass of struggling, wounded horses whose agonizing screams echoed over the plain. Carroll, peering through the lingering smoke, noted that not a single one of the enemy lay on the ground, though scores of wounded men were clinging weakly to the saddles of their more fortunate comrades.

"Say, lieutenant," commented Marshall, as he drove home the ramrod in his rifle, "did ye

notice that? Jest before the order came to fire, every one of them fellahs, when they saw our guns go up, squeezed down flat behind their hosses' necks. Jehosophat, but this is the dingdest battle,— nuthin' to shoot at but hosses."

The Californians were retreating, but not in haste. Slowly, beyond rifle range, they were reforming their fronts. But one lone horseman lingered near the American line, walking his horse slowly away, two wounded men clinging to his stirrups.

"Shame! Shame!" shouted Marshall. "That's what I call a dirty trick." His remarks were addressed to one of the sailors, who had covered with his musket the retreating figure of Don José Antonio Arillo. Others of the frontiersmen echoed Marshall's protest, and the sailor, abashed, lowered his weapon.

The waiting vaqueros had galloped up with the extra mounts; the Californians of both wings had again formed in two squadrons. Again their bugles sounded the charge.

Back they came with lances lowered, the plain thundering under their galloping steeds. Midway in their mad career they fired a volley from their escopetas. As Carroll gave the order to fire, he saw Captain Gillie reel backward, his hand to his face.

Again the volley roared from the American

ranks, and the smoke hid the rushing line of horsemen. While it hung idly in the air, the square, now a triple line of glistening bayonets, waited to impale the oncoming foe. But through the smoky wall came no threatening lance points, no looming forms of men and horses, but shouts of dismay and cries of pain and anguish. The Californian charge had again been halted midway by the withering fire from the American ranks.

The lieutenant rushed to Captain Gillie's assistance. He was leaning against a cart, his face white and dazed and his forehead bleeding. Quickly Carroll wiped the blood from the wound, and to his amazement and relief noted that it was nothing more than a severe bruise.

"A spent ball, captain—nothing worse," he commented. Yet the shock had knocked Gillie almost senseless.

The front of the enemy's line was a tangle of wounded men and plunging, rearing horses. The latter, their chests torn by musket balls, were screaming in agony. The ground round about was dotted with figures, crawling painfully away from the American line. Riderless horses were everywhere.

"Lord, look at the empty saddles!" shouted a marine, exultantly.

"Look a little closer, boy," commented Marshall, "an' ye'll see a heel stickin' over the top of

the saddle and a fist hangin' to the pommel. Them greasers," he added, "are the best hossmen in the hull darn world. There's a hundred or two of them out there, hangin' by their eyelashes an' the skin of their teeth to the t' other side of their beasts."

"Bring the guns into action," shouted Commodore Stockton.

The six guns which had been held in readiness were turned toward the enemy.

Again the Californians were advancing. With a long-drawn yell that had in it a note of despair, the cavalry for the third time swooped on the square from both sides. Hardly twenty yards away were they when the muskets again thundered smoke and flame, and while the echoes of the volley were still ringing in the ear, the cannon poured its deadly fire into the wavering ranks.

John Carroll waited with agonized heart. At the very moment he had given the order to fire, he had recognized Don José Antonio in the front rank of the charge. Through the gray reek in front of him he saw a stumbling horse, a wavering lance point, then a dismounted, tottering man. Quickly a pistol beside him spoke, and the Californian threw up his hands and reeled backward. Carroll's heart sickened.

Disregarding the warning cries of his men, he broke through the ranks and rushed toward the

corpse. It was the young officer who had escorted him to the lonely adobe the night of his escape from the pueblo.

On the plain horses lay dead in rows where they had fallen before the withering volleys from the square. Though scores of the enemy were wounded, many seriously, by the flying buckshot and bullets, yet but one lay dead. Only the matchless horsemanship and protective tactics of the Californians had saved them from wholesale slaughter. With half of their force unmounted, their powder exhausted, their cannon and escopetas useless, to attempt another charge would have been sheer madness.

The test had been conclusive. Against a well-armed, well-drilled, well-equipped square of infantry, three deep, no cavalry, however fiery and chivalrous, could successfully contend. Among the Americans four had lost their lives, while seven lay dying on the ox carts.

As John Carroll turned his glass on the Californian column, now slowly disappearing toward the hills, his heart throbbed with thankfulness. He could distinguish, riding in the rear, the figure of Arillo, his princely head bowed low in deep dejection.

Between the victorious Americans and the rebellious city there was not an armed man. The bugle sang the order to march.

The pueblo of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels, and all therein, lay at the mercy of Commodore Stockton.

The Sons of Ancient Spain had made their last stand.

CHAPTER XXXI

"SHE SHALL PRAY FOR YOUR DEATH"

TO the wan-eyed girl at the lattice comes the shrill scream of the fife, the throb of the drum, the measured tread of marching men. Far down the street, in the gray of the evening, a gleam of blue, a flicker of red, and the rising murmur of many voices; the pueblo is again in the hands of the hated invader.

Contemptuously indifferent to the curses and scowls of the stragglers on the street, unheeding the yells of execration from the handful of vaqueros on the hill above the church, slowly, steadily, the column pushes on toward the plaza.

Suddenly a shot rings out, a bullet whizzes viciously above the heads of the Americans — some drunken fool on the hill has discharged his piece.

Short, shouted orders, the squads of fours merge into long double lines, the musket barrels slope upward. A stalwart figure,— oh, so familiar to the watcher at the window,— raises his saber and the plaza shivers with the shock of the volley. On the hilltop three tumble sprawling from their horses; the others scamper madly away.

Past her window in the gathering dusk, like

some mad phantasmagoria, sweep the serried ranks, among them John Carroll, his naked weapon still in his hand, his face thin and haggard, his eyes set straight ahead. With a choking sob the girl turns away.

To Loreto Arillo, her lover has come again—come with fire and sword, his hands red with the blood of her people.

In the home of Doña Chonita, now the headquarters of the American officers, John Carroll stood before a table where sat Commodore Stockton and General Kearney. The commodore had sent for him.

"Lieutenant Carroll," he began, "Captain Gillie tells me that you know the country well about here—the country to the north."

"I rode over it many times last summer—several times as far as the foothills," replied Carroll.

"Flores," Stockton continued, "is probably hurrying toward the mountains, though it is possible that he may attempt to escape to Mexico through Sonora. Colonel Fremont is somewhere north of the pueblo. By this time he must have received the dispatch sent to him two weeks ago by Captain Henseley. He will be on the lookout for Flores."

The commodore ran his finger over a map on the table; then after a moment's thought he continued:

"Fremont must now be well past the Verdugo Hills. He will probably pass between them and the mountains, hoping to cut off the enemy's retreat.

"For the deluded rank and file of the Californians," Stockton went on, fixing his large, bold eyes on the lieutenant's troubled face, "I have much sympathy and respect, but not for their leaders, Arillo, Flores, Pico, Alvaro, Garfias, and De la Guerra. For breaking their paroles they deserve a drumhead court-marital. They are well aware of this, and may possibly take to the mountains and inaugurate guerrilla warfare. But there is a possibility that they may meet with Fremont and surrender to him. I wish the colonel to know that these six men are not to be included in the terms of capitulation. I am not doing them any injustice. On this matter I have had private and reliable information that it was they and they alone who are responsible for the revolt and the bloodshed at Dominguez and San Pascual."

The commodore was speaking the truth. His secret informant was none other than Hugo Vanuela, whose communications had strengthened his determination to wreak upon the Dons the fullest vengeance of military law.

"I think it well that you should know the intent and purposes of these dispatches which you are

to carry to Colonel Fremont," he explained, as he handed him the papers.

"Ride well to the east of the Verdugo Hills, lieutenant," Stockton repeated. "Keep a sharp lookout for the enemy, and lose no time. Within an hour you must be on your way. I wish my instructions to reach Fremont before he grants any concessions to the men I have mentioned. He may do so innocently unless warned in time. Good luck go with you," he added, as he shook Carroll's hand.

Swinging himself into the saddle from the veranda, the lieutenant trotted out into the plaza. Torturing memories wrung him as he walked his horse slowly through the darkness toward the Arillo home. Bitter-sweet, the pictures of the past marshaled themselves before him in swift array,— the night (it seemed years ago) that on this very spot he had felt the soft form of Loreto Arillo clinging to him—had seen the light in her eyes that had sent the blood tingling through his veins. And now in the few moments left to him he was going to her. Come what might, whether he was to be met with contemptuous scorn or forgiving tenderness, once more, possibly for the last time, he would look into those glorious eyes, whatever of sorrow or grief or pain the future might bring.

A movement in the spot of denser black under

the veranda, a patter of feet, the swish of a woman's garment, and he felt hands clinging to his stirrup leather.

"Juan," came a whisper through the darkness.

He was looking down into the eyes of Loreto Arillo, upraised to meet his.

Forgotten the dispatches, forgotten the imperative necessity of haste, forgotten everything save that here, within reach of his arms, was the woman he loved. He leaped from his horse and gathered her to him, kissing her rapturously on lips and hair. From her came neither response nor protest as she leaned heavily against him.

"Mi querida, I came as quickly as I could and—I must go in a few moments. I carry papers"—he hesitated for a moment—"to the north."

The girl started, and drew away from him.

"Oh, thou—thou—thou—" she gasped as with straightened arm she held him at a distance. "Thou ridest to Fremont with papers from Stockton—the cruel Stockton—to warn Fremont to show no mercy. Mercy of God, my Juan, can it be so?"

In his silence she saw the confirmation of her fears.

For that afternoon, with the roar of the cannon on the mesa still ringing in her ears, she had heard one of the oldest men of the pueblo comforting her mother with the assurance that two possible

avenues of escape lay open to her father and his friends. They might secure favorable terms of capitulation from Fremont, now advancing southward, or they might escape to Mexico. But now the last faint hope was to be destroyed. Warned of Stockton's attitude toward the Dons, Fremont could show no mercy, and with his well-equipped cavalry he would swoop down upon them as an eagle strikes its defenseless prey.

"Holy Mother," she moaned as her head dropped on his shoulder, "thou art to be my father's messenger of death!"

The tortured, suffering man was silent. Raising her head, the girl drew quietly away from him.

"Come within the house." Her tone was calm and deliberate. "It is not fitting that we should stand without by the veranda, even if it be dark. Come, Juan—for but a moment. It may be the last time for us," she added meaningly.

As he entered the long, low living room he noted Señora Arillo kneeling at a table, her head on her arms, absorbed in silent grief. She had been praying; her beads were still clasped in her hands, hands on which the teardrops glistened in the candle light. At their entrance she raised her head and stared at them half stupidly, without word of welcome.

But Loreto had no thought for her mother. Passing her fingers deftly over the front of Carroll's

jacket, she felt within the crunch of papers. Then, desperation showing in her face and eyes, she threw herself upon him and pressed her ripe red lips to his passionately.

"Juan, Juan, thou lovest me—is it not so?"

"God knows I do, Loreto."

"To-night, then, thou wilt prove it to me."

There was eager triumph in her voice. Her silken cheek lay against his; her breath was hot on his neck. Against his breast he could feel the rounded outlines of her bosom.

"If thou lovest me—then give me the papers. Give them to me. But little hope is there from Fremont. He is cruel; by him were the Berryessa boys and their uncle shot to death, and Don Jesus Pico at San Luis Obispo, yet what little hope there may be the coming of thy papers will kill. Oh, Juan, Juan, give me the papers!"

Her hands were fumbling at the buttons of his jacket.

The man groaned.

"I cannot, Loreto, I cannot. Little thou knowest what thou asketh. I cannot. God help me—God help us both," he moaned, as he grasped the hands that were now reaching for the dispatches.

Señora Arillo, still on her knees, was staring at them with pale face and tortured eyes. In her very presence her daughter was shattering every tradition of maidenly modesty, clinging to a

man with lithe encircling arms and burning lips—lips that were raining kisses on his set, agonized face. The mother's countenance showed her suffering, but she was silent. The life of Don Antonio was at stake. Loreto was bartering her caresses for her father's life, as a courtesan sells herself for gold.

Again the girl entwined him in her arms, her cheek against his, her tears dampening his face and brow.

"Give them to me! Think, Juan, five hours'—three hours'—perhaps one hour's delay means my father's life. Given time, he may escape to Mexico. Thou canst say thou lost the papers—dropped them on the way. Give them to me!" she pleaded.

"No harm will come to thee. 'Twould not be strange to lose the papers. Give them to me," she panted, "and I am thine—when and how thou wilt—here and now if thou wish it. In one moment we can bring Father Estenaga from the Plaza Church."

No words from John Carroll's quivering lips. Within his soul a battle raged, such as seldom comes to any man—a battle such as leaves marks of age on cheek and brow.

"If thou wilt not give them to me, promise me," she pleaded, "oh, promise me, Juan, that thou wilt lose them, or that thou wilt lose thy way

till sunrise, among the hills. Ah!" She fancied she saw in his face signs of relenting. "Thou canst do that at least, Juan; promise, for I know that thou lovest me."

Two big tears were slowly stealing down Carroll's cheeks, but his face was set and his jaw firm. Not for nothing had John Carroll come of a race of soldiers. The battle was over; the soldier had conquered the lover. Gently he removed the girl's clinging arms from about his neck, and held her wrists as he spoke.

"Heaven have mercy on us, Loreto, I—I—I cannot. I must do my duty, come what may. I must go. This—this is beyond my strength. I cannot be counted a traitor to my country and to my duty. No Carroll ever failed in the face of a command. Kiss me once, Loreto,—for the last time."

Her moist lustrous eyes gazed into his for a space. In them she saw no hope. The sacrifice of her maidenly modesty, her womanly reserve, had been in vain. Over her face flooded a wave of angry red. Injured pride stung through the deadening despair of the moment.

"Go!" She motioned toward the door. "My father's blood will redden your hands. Go, and leave me to pray on bended knees for your death. Go, that I may ask the Virgin to grant that you may never reach Fremont."

His shoulders drooped as if laden with a sudden weight. Blindly he groped to the door and mounted his horse. His heart aching, his head whirling, he spurred his mount into a wild gallop around the corner and into one of the side streets leading north out of the plaza. Ever before him rose the tear-stained face of Loreto, and the bitterness of her parting words. Now, even now, she was praying, praying that—

Like a blow, the words of the Indian woman came to him, palpitating through his mind with cruel reiteration: "She who loves you shall pray for your death—shall pray for your death—shall pray for your death." His horse's feet seemed to patter the words as he swung on.

Again their meaning changed and their regular thud sang: "Blood shall smear your path—smear your path—smear your path."

Furiously he spurred his horse, dashing through the stream without pause, the flying water mingling unnoticed with the perspiration on his face. Over the rise in the ground he galloped and wound through the same hollow, where, sick and dizzy, one August day six months before he had gazed into the muzzles of the executioners' menacing guns.

"God," he groaned, "why didn't I die then? I should have been spared this."

Around him he felt, drawing closer, nearer, and

tighter, the meshes of the unpitying, encircling fate, foretold by the blind Indian hag. In the starry sky above, in the dark earth below, in his own soul, nowhere was there help, hope, or mercy. Over him surged a great wave of bitterness—an ocean of self-pity and despair.

Suddenly there fell upon him a calm—a calm so strange that it seemed almost like a relief. He sighed and wondered. Though he knew it not, it was the calm of utterly exhausted emotion. Dimly he felt that he could suffer no more, that the limit had been reached. Truly it mattered little what happened now. Almost he felt himself wishing that Loreto's prayer would be granted, that a flying bullet or a kindly lance point would end it all. He was ready.

He reined his horse suddenly. Was that the soft scuffle of hoofs in the rear? Cantering behind a rise, he waited. Surely that dark shadow moving on the far side of the arroyo was a horseman! He drew his pistol from his belt and peered again across the depression. But no dark form emerged from the bushes; all was silence. Then he smiled cheerfully. It was Marshall, he concluded, attired in his strange disguise, following him as bodyguard. Still somewhat puzzled, for he could see no reason for the frontiersman's secretive tactics, he resumed his way, now in the arroyo, over its white sands, now on the

brink, ever peering watchfully into the scattered shrubbery on its level floor.

He was now six or seven miles from the pueblo. Far away to the north loomed the mountain range, a heaving swell of blackness against the starlit sky. To the right, across the arroyo, rose the last of a succession of low rolling hills, that ran northeast from the city. Beyond that to the mountains, five miles away, there was no eminence from which he could look for the warning camp fires of Fremont. Carefully he climbed the hill, and as his horse drew out on the rounded top, free from oaks, he started, and muttered in surprise:

"Fremont's camp."

He was the soldier again, alert and attentive. Below him, bathed in the mellow moonlight, lay the rounded, billowing tops of the oaks, with here and there an open park. A half-mile or so away, to the northeast, around the foot of a low conical hill, lay a crescent-shaped line of glittering specks of flame.

His brow knit in perplexity. Was it Fremont or Flores, or both? Had the two armies met already? Had there been a battle, or a peaceful surrender? He did not know.

If the fires he saw flickering like stars against the blackness of the distant hill were those of the beaten Californian army, he was truly in a dangerous position, for he could not be far from

their outposts. At any moment he was likely to encounter one of their pickets.

And yet it might be Fremont. If it were, and he were to ride still farther west in search of the Pathfinder, it would mean a loss of hours before the dispatches were delivered. Stockton had urged haste. The words of Loreto came to him: "Lose thy way till sunrise," and with them the temptation to ride westward. No blame could be attached to him; it would be but an error of judgment. But the blood of his father within him was uppermost, and he put the disloyal thought sternly away. There was nothing to do but reconnoiter.

Tying his horse to an oak, for he felt that he could more easily escape detection on foot, he cautiously descended the hill, gliding noiselessly from tree to tree till he reached the edge of the arroyo. Silently creeping from one open spot to another, along the winding rim of the water course, he could hear below him the gurgle of running water and the drowsy chirps of birds disturbed from their slumbers in the trees about.

Smooth and level was the road by the arroyo's brink, dwindling at times to a mere bridle path, bordered at his left by the dark tops of the sycamores, whose roots were set in the arroyo bottom. His plans were made. Could he approach near enough to the picket line, a few moments' scrutiny

would tell whether the camp was American or Californian. He would follow the rim of the arroyo to the north toward the mountains until due west of the camp, and then creep carefully over the rise that loomed now between him and the camp fires. Possibly he could creep near enough to catch a glimpse of the men moving about the fires or to overhear a few spoken words.

A mile of stealthy advance; the road swung away from the bank; the trees faded away on all sides, leaving an open moonlit space, where stood alone a giant oak, wide branched and stately. Suddenly Carroll recognized the tree. He had ridden past it one day with Don Augustin Alvaro. Over the rise to the east where shone the camp fires was the ranch house of the San Pasqual, the country home of Don José Antonio Arillo.

As he stepped into the shadow of the oak his waiting ear detected the sound of approaching footsteps. He glanced upward. Above him stretched a long, level limb of the tree. Bounding from the earth, he grasped it with both hands, and drew himself up. In a moment he was lying flat on the bough, unseen in the obscurity, motionless, watchful.

CHAPTER XXXII

BY THE GIANT OAK

SULLENLY and doggedly the beaten Californian army drew slowly to the northeast from the battlefield of the mesa.

From the vanguard, where rode Flores, Arillo, and the other officers, to the groaning wounded in the last of the lumbering *carretas*, was the speechless gloom of utter despair. Through the green, wide-flung vales, around the low, rolling hills to the northeast, the cavalry line wound slowly and painfully. Ever, during the short winter evening, their anxious eyes turned to the southward, where the pickets of their own rear guard could be seen on the swelling hilltops watchfully alert for a glimpse of the enemy. But from the solitary horseman on the eminences came no fluttering signal, no warning pistol flash that told of pursuit.

The westering sun was low in the sky before the San Pasqual Rancho was reached. There, on the wide open space at the foot of the hill, the order was given to make camp. Food was not lacking, for Arillo, with characteristic forethought for the welfare of the men, even while the last wild charge of the Californian horse was rolling back in confusion, had hastily dispatched galloping

couriers to the rancho with orders to prepare for the coming of the army. It was his own cattle that were driven into camp, butchered on the spot, and roasted at the fires that in the gathering dusk soon blazed around the foot of the hill.

In the adobe built by Leo the Stranger the officers made their headquarters. Early after their arrival they held a council of war. All were present except Hugo Vanuela. He had been degraded to the ranks as punishment for his failure to advance at the critical moment during the fight at the river, a punishment which he received with a contemptuous, indifferent shrug.

Their councils were divided; they could reach no conclusion. Commandant Flores and Garfias urged that the Dons disband the army and escape to Mexico by the way of the San Gorgonio Pass. With characteristic optimism, Pico and De la Guerra, believing that in spite of his threats the American commander, now that he had attained his end, the capture of the pueblo, might yet prove magnanimous, were in favor of again opening negotiations with Stockton. Rico and Cota advised retreat to the mountains, where a guerrilla warfare could be carried on interminably.

"Wilt ride with us to Sonora, Don José Antonio?" said Flores to Arillo, who had taken no part in the discussions.

"I cannot, I will not, run away. Far rather

would I have history relate that Don José Antonio Arillo died even on the scaffold than that Don José Antonio Arillo fled. I will remain, or go to the mountains; which, I have not decided."

It was finally determined to postpone further discussion till the morrow. Worn out by the stirring events of the day, they retired to their couches.

Arillo, to whose eyes sleep refused to come, mounted his horse and made a round of the outposts before again seeking his couch. Over the rolling hills, the darkened plain, the gently rounded tops of the oaks, the high-sailing moon cast its softened glow. High up on the hill above him the lone figure of a picket was silhouetted against the starlit sky. To the south the arroyo hill rose, a swell of lusterless blue-black, to meet the spangled glory of the night. Close at hand the dewdrops glistened on the leaves and grass blades. Around him, half hidden in the dense shadows of the oaks, lay the twisted forms of his men. Mingled with the ceaseless song of the spring came the champing of the tethered horses farther up the hill, the movement of a restless sleeper, a few muttered words,— the many indistinct sounds of the slumbering camp.

The Don, his inspection of the outposts completed, dismounted and threaded his way among the recumbent figures beneath the oaks.

Bending over, he touched a sleeper on the cheek, and Manuel, startled, sat up.

"Come, my son," whispered Arillo. "I would speak with thee."

"Mount," commanded the father, as he motioned to his horse standing in the open. Wonderingly the boy obeyed.

"Listen, Manuel, my son." There was a tremor in the voice of the Don. "It is now time for thee to return home. Leave thy arms here. Ride quietly into the pueblo. Speak to no one. Remain within the house for many days with thy mother and sister. They will need thee far more than does the army.

"Son," and Arillo's voice was now husky with emotion, "it may be we shall not meet again. If the worst comes to me, do thou try to bear it like a man. It will be for thee, then, to uphold and comfort by thy strength thy mother and sister. Remember, they will look to thee.

"Whatever comes to pass, Manuel, remember it is the will of God. In the days to come, let there be no bitterness in thy heart toward the Americans. It will be but the way of war. Do thou try to learn their tongue and their ways. Guard well thy mother and sister. Remember what I now say to thee—what my father, dying, said to me,—'An Arillo can never be aught but a Christian and a gentleman.'

"May the saints preserve thee, my son. Go—go by the south; the pickets there have orders to let thee pass."

The boy, awed by the solemnity in his father's voice, was sobbing with bent head. Suddenly he leaped to the ground.

"No, no, father; I will not go. Let me die with thee," he implored, as he clung to him frantically.

"No, my child; it must not be. They need thee. Go, my son; go, I command thee."

One last embrace, and the boy, still sobbing, obeyed. As the sound of his horse's hoofbeats died away in the distance the father sank to the grass, his head on his knees. Over him surged a great wave of despair. His heart ached as he thought of his wife, of Loreto, of José, whose fate no one knew, of Manuel, whom he had seen probably for the last time, and the inevitable ignominy of the morrow. From the adobe came the low moans of the wounded, and the shrill scream of a dying man.

"This," he bared his head as if in the presence of death, "this—is—the end. Oh, God above," he moaned, as he gazed up at the scintillating firmament, "is there no help?"

But the stars looked down on the broken-hearted man with their cold, steely glitter, as they have looked down at the agony and soul grief of countless thousands of men since the beginning of time.

The sound of a stealthy footstep caused him to turn his head. In the dim form he had glimpsed melting into the obscurity of the underbrush the Don fancied he had recognized the figure of Hugo Vanuela. Arillo knew well that he had not been one of the evening's detail of pickets. That the man who had been under suspicion since his disobedience at the river should be prowling about the sleeping camp was a matter for instant investigation.

Now halting in the shadows, now dodging from tree to tree, then dashing across open, moonlit spaces, Arillo followed the retreating figure for nearly a mile, up the gentle rise to the west, and down the long slope toward the arroyo.

Close was the fugitive to the edge of the chasm, when, as if disdaining further concealment, he halted beneath a giant oak that stood alone in a circle of moonlight. It was Hugo Vanuela, and as he faced Arillo he drew his sword with a fine air of bravado.

"So-o-o," there was malignant triumph in the long drawn vowel, "it is the Señor Arillo. I expected you to follow. You were very prompt. I thank you, señor."

"Why this skulking on the outskirts of the camp, Señor Vanuela? Return at once to your company," ordered Don José Antonio.

"I am not a member of your command;

neither are you the officer of the day," retorted Vanuela defiantly.

"You are a traitor, Vanuela, as you were but yesterday at the river. This is more than mere desertion—it means treachery. You intend to carry to the enemy news of our whereabouts," answered Arillo hotly, as his bared blade glistened in the moonlight.

"Good," returned Vanuela, as he noted the action. "It is well, Señor Don José Antonio Arillo, that we fight here, with the land of the San Pasqual beneath our feet,—the land that was my father's, is now yours, and shall yet be mine. It is well and fitting also that you should die here."

In the clear, moonlit stillness the musical clang of their ringing blades came to Lieutenant John Carroll as he clung enthralled to the limb of the mighty oak. Now on the dewlit grass, now gyrating under the shadow of the tree, the men fought, Arillo ever on the offensive; Vanuela retreating, wheeling, cautious and wary, playing a waiting game. As they swung around the tree trunk they were hidden from Carroll's view by the intervening branches. When they again emerged into the moonlight he saw that Arillo's cheek was laid wide open, and that his white shirt was streaked with blood. Closer, ever nearer to his overhanging bough they moved, until the American could look down into their faces, Arillo's hard,

set, and worried, Vanuela's twisted in sneering triumph. Like streaks of burnished silver their blades scintillated in the moonlight, and far up the hill a mocking bird, in answer to the rhythmic clang, awoke from its slumbers and poured forth its soul in song.

Vanuela was a magnificent swordsman; the agility of youth and his sturdy strength were in his favor, while the pace he was now setting was a killing one for Arillo's maturer years. Already Don José Antonio was weakening; the silent watcher in the tree could hear his hard-drawn breath.

A furious clatter of steel, and Vanuela gave way before the Don's desperate attack. But only for a moment. Hugo grinned as he felt on his blade the weakening pressure that told of his antagonist's relaxed effort.

A few seconds of further play, and Carroll saw the sword of Don José Antonio fly through the air and rebound from the tree trunk.

Not a moment did Hugo Vanuela hesitate. With incredible quickness he unhooked the riata dangling at his hip and cast its long noose over Arillo's shoulders, and then, loop after loop, bound him in its repeated folds, until he was helpless. Panting and breathless in its stiffening coils, the Don tottered to the ground.

Vanuela silently drew from his clothing a

tinder box, clicked the steel and flint, and calmly lit a cigar. After he had exhaled a mouthful of smoke he seated himself on a stone, facing the fallen man, who was staring at him with wondering eyes.

"It has long been my desire, Don José Antonio Arillo, to have a conversation, a very private conversation, with you, and this will doubtless be the last opportunity that will be offered to me. You, Señor Don José Antonio, are one of the *gente de razon*," he went on in a malevolently caressing voice. "From me your faces were always turned away, and the doors of your homes closed, though open to many a man in the pueblo who had not the wherewithal to buy a second coat. Always have you and yours despised me. You and your friends, you killed my father and took my father's lands that by right should now be mine. That night when my father lay dying at San Fernando he made provision for the future, Don José Antonio, for I swore to him that once again would I win the rancho of the San Pasqual, and that you and yours should suffer—should pay in blood and sorrow, in grief and tears. I have kept the oath; so shall it be. For I shall see, when the Americans take you and the others of the *gente de razon*, that rich blood of yours flow freely on the sand. A stone wall—the firing squad. It is a pretty picture, is it not, Don José

Antonio Arillo? Or maybe—one cannot tell—the Americans have some strange ways. It is said they like the rope. Perhaps it will be that very honorable death for the noblemen of the *gente de razon.*"

The pride of Don José Antonio kept him silent. He was staring at Vanuela scornfully. Hugo watched him curiously, showing his big white teeth in a satisfied grin.

"Pardon me, my dear señor," he continued. "I assure you I am telling you a very wicked untruth. I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you shot or hanged by the Americans, but instead a much greater one, that of killing you myself in a few minutes. Oh, yes; it is true you might cry out. It might bring some one from the camp, and I should simply have to kill you the sooner."

Above, Carroll clung to the bough, shocked, silent, motionless. But along the limb lay his pistol, primed and cocked, its sight covering the head of Hugo Vanuela. A dozen times his finger trembled on the trigger, but he hesitated. The Californian camp was less than a mile away, and a single shot would mean his capture, the loss of the dispatches, and possible execution as a spy. With thumping heart and set teeth, he waited.

"They do say, señor," went on Hugo, "that one grows wise, very wise, when close to death.

Your life, and the lives of the other fools yonder who broke their paroles, are forfeit by the laws of war. For all of this you have me, Hugo Vanuela, the son of the drunken foreigner and the Indian mother, to thank. It is so because I made it come so, Don José Antonio."

In Arillo's pale face there was a look of utter bewilderment.

"I have heard my father say—before you and your friends killed him—that it was the brain and not the blood that made the man, even were the blood that of the noble *gente de razon*. And now the victory is to the brain of the despised half-breed, Hugo Vanuelo.

"Listen, Don José Antonio Arillo." He rose to his feet and looked down with a diabolical sneer into the face of the man at his feet. "I have hated you always. I hated you when my father died, and before. For months you and your friends have been but as dough in my hands. Like sheep have I led you to your doom. It is a long story, but you shall hear it.

"It was I—I, and the Englishman MacNamara, who sent the boys to the gate the night Reyes was killed. I told the fool Gillie that it was you and others who prompted them to the attack. And it is myself you have to thank for the indignity of the chains."

"You—you—" gasped Arillo.

"Myself, none other, Don José Antonio. The next day, along with the dreamer Palera and the Englishman MacNamara, we gathered them at the Paredon Bluff. It was I, you will remember, who brought to you the proclamation. Madre de Dios, but I was a fine patriot in those days—all with one purpose, my dear friend,—to have you break your parole. Yes, I, Hugo Vanuela, the despised half-breed, did it with the help of the Englishman, who was Don Pablo de Almagro, the Spaniard from Mexico," he chuckled, "he whom you found dead in the powder house at San Gabriel. It was true! Alvaro was right! He was but an English agent who had planned to give California to the English. You were too late. It was I who killed him, but not before much gold, much English gold, had passed from his hands into mine. That night I also spoiled the powder."

"You spoiled the powder?" panted Arillo.

"None other, my dear Arillo. That is not all. Much more have I done. It was I who sent the note to Cota that prevented the signal being given to Benito Willard, the time you planned to speak with Stockton. It was at my suggestion that Flores sent your young José to San Luis Obispo with dispatches. Fremont caught and hanged him, I have learned.

"In every incident of the last six months, Don

José Antonio, you have but been my tool. Yet, por Dios," he added with a grin, "you were not alone. Not only you, but Gillie, Flores, Stockton, and even that clever, clever man, MacNamara.

"And there is yet one more who shall do my bidding, even as these have done it,—the American colonel, Fremont. When I have had the very great pleasure of seeing you stiff in death, I shall ride to him and bring him here to capture the other fools yonder.

"What think you now, Don José Antonio, of the despised half-breed Hugo Vanuela, who—it is sad to think you will not live to see it—will have high place and honor under the new government, when the carcasses of the *gente de razon* are rotting under the sod?"

"You—you devil," panted Arillo as he struggled hopelessly with his bonds.

Vanuela shrugged his shoulders, and grinned happily.

"What will you have, señor? Your people always have said my father was a devil. How can one help it with such ancestry?

"It is strange, is it not, Señor Arillo," he went on as he drew his dagger from his belt, "how a little prick of a piece of steel can end a man's hates and loves? Ah, yes, it is a mystery, and one that you will understand shortly. You will be very, very wise, my friend, a few minutes from

now. I have told you all these things, and I do not fear that you will repeat them, for a dead man cannot speak. But one favor I would ask. You may see my father over there. Will you tell him for me that I have kept my word, that the debt has been paid?"

He stood above the helpless man, toying with his dagger as if loath to end the gloating joy of this long-looked-for moment.

But Don José Antonio was silent. His eyes were closed and his lips moving faintly. He was praying. When he opened his eyes he looked up fearlessly into Vanuela's.

"Pray on—pray on," sneered Hugo. "I will wait. Pray to your angels and saints to save you. Let them save you, and I will believe they are more powerful than Hugo Vanuela.

"When you are dead," he went on, "I shall ride at once, not to Stockton but to Fremont, who is, one of my Indian scouts tells me, but twenty miles to the west, beyond the Cahuenga Pass, and in a few hours the other fools over yonder shall be prisoners of war."

Dagger in hand, he stepped toward the Don, "Take this thought with you into the other world that after you are dead your daughter will be mine. I may marry her—perhaps; perhaps not, if it does not suit me. I shall have her, anyway. Why should the daughter of the *gente de razon*

fare better than any brown Indian girl in the willows?"

Hardly had the words left his lips when a spurt of red fire flashed in the branches of the oak, and the silent night crashed with the echoes of a pistol shot.

Vanuela reeled, and his hand went feebly to his head. But in a moment he had drawn his sword, and crossed blades with John Carroll.

"You beast,—you—devil," hissed the American. But there was no answer from Vanuela's trembling lips. He was still shaky from the shock of the bullet. As he gave ground before the lieutenant's furious onslaught, the blood trickled down his brown cheek in two dark streams.

With all the fierce fury of a frenzied hate, Carroll fought on. Twice he had thought to have his sword in Vanuela's throat, but the latter cleverly eluded him. Again he pressed him close, confident that the end was near, when to their ears, above the ringing of steel, came the pounding of hoofs over the rise to the east.

The Californian had been driven near to the edge of the arroyo, and as Carroll relaxed his efforts he made an agile backward leap, and, sword in hand, disappeared in the crashing underbrush. Carroll was alone.

Nearer and nearer thundered the pounding hoofs. As a score of mounted Californians dashed

up to the oak, Carroll, who was racing down the roadway, darted into the shrubbery.

Under the tree Don José Antonio, bound fast in the winding strands of the riata, lay unconscious.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AT THE DEVIL'S ROCK

CROUCHING in the bushes, hardly twenty feet away from the roadway, Lieutenant Jack Carroll listened attentively to the sounds coming from beneath the oak.

A cessation of hoofbeats, wild yells of rage, and he knew that friends had found Don José Antonio, bound and bleeding. The murmur of many excited voices rising in a babble was followed by loudly shouted orders to pursue the assailant. Arillo was unconscious, maybe dead. Horsemen were galloping north and south along the rim of the arroyo. The man hunt was on.

Carroll threaded his way cautiously through the undergrowth toward the brink and leaned far out over the edge, staring into the moonlit depth for the glimpse of a moving figure. With a wild scurry of sand and stone, his feet unexpectedly gave way, and he found himself sliding to the floor of the arroyo, twenty feet below.

"There he is! Hear him!" shouted a voice in Spanish from the bank above. The hue and cry was raised. The human pack was on his trail.

The hunted man paused for a moment. Before him lay the level floor of the arroyo, down its center a winding ribbon of murmuring, moonlit

water. To reach his horse, hidden in the oaks on the side of the arroyo hill, was manifestly impossible; around the foot of the eminence he could hear the searchers calling to one another. His only chance was to run farther up the arroyo, find a place of concealment, and remain hidden until the fury of the chase had abated.

Hurrying along the soft rim of yellow sand at the water's edge, he ran on noiselessly, preserving his strength and wind for the final effort he felt was certain to come, should they catch sight of him. Past him, as he ran, glided, dreamlike, forms of dwarf oak and scrubby sycamore. Ever he looked to the higher ground up the arroyo, where the banks closed in cañon-like above the little stream, and a deeper blackness told of tall evergreen trees. There, in darkness and silence, was safety.

Only once, as he heard a clatter of falling pebbles, did he glance back in time to catch a glimpse of the dark forms of mounted men, picking their way down the sloping bank. Clearer came the sound of the chase behind him, the creak of leather and rattle of hoofs among the loose stones of the river bed. A curse and a shout, followed by a bullet splash in the water at his feet, told that at last they had caught sight of his fleeing form. Carroll knew the voice; it was that of Ballestos. Another bullet sang above

his head. The pounding of hoofs and exultant yells drew nearer and nearer.

A final sprint, and he dashed into the comparative darkness of the little cañon. Turning sharply to the left, he threw himself flat into the impenetrable blackness between the trees and remained motionless. Kindly, the moon slid behind a cloud, and past him his pursuers thundered in wild pursuit.

Breathless, exhausted, he lay, until the hoofbeats died away in the distance. He glanced upward for his landmarks. Above him towered the tops of the evergreens at the foot of which he had sought refuge. Behind them rose a steep hill, capped by a cone-shaped rock. The summit, he calculated, would afford a safe hiding place, and be inaccessible to horses. There one man could stand off a thousand. Even that might not be necessary. If they discovered his ruse and returned, he might possibly slip over the narrow isthmus-like neck beyond the rock and escape into the friendly and more remote blackness of the trees beyond. If cornered, he would fight to the end. Capture meant death—when Ballestos knew the quarry.

With infinite caution he crept up the steep face of the slope, clinging to the shrubs, straggling bushes, grass roots, and jutting stones. The rock loomed above him, nearer and closer, clear-cut against the starlit sky. There was a dark gash

across its front a few feet above the shadow which shrouded its foot. It proved to be a low cave, a deep gouge across the face of the pinnacle.

Could he reach the opening? It seemed an impossible feat. Standing on the narrow ledge at the foot of the rock, he reached his arms high above his head, seeking for a crevice, a piece of roughened rock by which he might draw himself up into the cleft. Under ordinary circumstances the effort would be slight, but necessity for silence made it difficult. Slowly the groping hands moved across the rock face. At last a lump on the slanting surface met his searching fingers. Flattening himself against the wall for concealment, he drew himself up, his knees scraping cruelly as he glued himself to the almost vertical face of the rock. Inch by inch he wriggled upward, one hand reaching out for another hold, while, limpet-like, he held fast with toe, elbow, shoulder, and chin. Once he slipped, and as his body sank a little a thrill of fear swept over him. For a moment he pictured himself crashing to the rock-strewn stream forty feet below.

After a series of breathless efforts, and what seemed like years, he found himself lying in the cleft, his heart pounding in his ears, his scraped knees smarting painfully, his fingers torn and bleeding, but his tired lungs expanding and releasing joyfully at every breath.

Soldier-like, he mechanically looked to his pistol. Then replacing it in his belt, he peered out. Below him the rock jutted out in a mighty chin, hiding from his view the narrow ribbon of ground where he had stood but a few moments before. Simultaneously, he heard his pursuers crashing over stones and through underbrush.

His ruse had been discovered; they were coming back. The splashing of horses' feet in the water, and a few short ejaculations in Castilian, told him that his stalkers were again at the foot of the slope.

"The cursed American is somewhere here," called out the authoritative voice of Ballestos. Then the officer lowered his tone, and subdued but excited murmurs came to the man hidden in the cleft above.

Again Carroll looked out cautiously. Through a rift in the treetops he could catch a glimpse of Ballestos, protesting, ordering. The men sat about, silent, on their horses.

"God and his angels, Señor Captain,"—the speaker's words had the imperfection of utterance that marked the half-Indian peon,—"that is the Devil's Rock. Not for ten thousand pesos would I go up it. Let the American stay with the devil who owns him."

"Fool!" snapped Ballestos. "Who will volunteer?" Again their voices lowered to an indistinct hum.

The hunted man waited, trembling with exhaustion and excitement. Would their superstitious fears after all overcome their desire for vengeance? This was indeed the Devil's Rock, where so many years ago the ill-fated Leo, the father of Vanuela, was reputed to have sung his wicked songs and chanted his unholy litanies in the moonlight.

In spite of the desperation of his position, Carroll smiled grimly. In a twinkling he changed his plans. A pistol shot would be proof positive to the trembling Californians below that their human quarry was within reach, but a blow, unseen, unheard, would inspire them with terror. He drew his heavy army pistol from his belt, grasped it by the barrel, and creeping to the edge of the rock lip, waited.

Footsteps, creeping, climbing, caused him to grasp his weapon more firmly, rise to one knee, and lean out as far as he dared within the shadow of the rock above. To the right of the cleft appeared a black head. Warily the Californian came on, setting one foot before the other on the narrow path.

As he stole on, stopping at every step to scan the obscurity about him, his head was almost on a level with the floor of the cave, where knelt Carroll, one hand on the ground, the other grasping the pistol upraised in readiness. The

Californian had evidently made the ascent from behind the rock, where the slope was more gradual. Apparently he expected and hoped to find no hidden fugitive.

Down came the pistol butt on the black head, with a sickening thud. Without even a moan the man fell, rolling and sliding into the darkness below. As the sound of crashing bushes died away, calls of inquiry came from below.

Immediately another Californian came silently around the rock from the left, dropped some five feet to the narrow ledge, and looked about him inquiringly.

"Pedro," he called softly.

Again Carroll's long arm shot out from the black cave above the man's head; the pistol butt caught him fairly above the temple. With a funny little squeal—a short of still-born shriek, the Californian reeled outward. Again the crashing of bushes and the trickling of stones told of a damaging slide and fall.

At the bottom of the slope all was confusion and terror. They had seen the forms of their two comrades come rolling and tumbling toward them, but the figure of Carroll was hidden from their sight by the intervening treetops.

Ballestos swore softly, and crossed himself. Dragging the two stricken men from beneath the tree trunks at the foot of the slope, they found

that Pedro was unconscious, and his companion dazed and badly hurt.

"Truly it is the devil's rock," he moaned. "I was struck and cast down by no one that I could see. It was the devil himself."

The Californians looked at one another, at their officers, at the rock gleaming gray-white behind the treetops.

"Por Dios," muttered one, "I would we were well away from here."

"Hearken, men," came the voice of Ballestos. "Will you allow the accursed American to escape who has almost murdered your colonel, Don José Antonio Arillo? He is doubtless an American scout who has stumbled on our camp. Well you know that he will carry to Stockton at the pueblo the news of our whereabouts. We will riddle the hill with bullets, and charge up together."

His words came clearly to the man above. Worn by the emotional stress of the last few hours, and tired by his strenuous physical efforts, Carroll felt almost tempted to laugh aloud at the mockery of fate. He, who had undoubtedly saved the life of Don José Antonio, was counted his would-be murderer; he, who had determined to make an appeal to Fremont for mercy for the condemned men, was believed to be a scout who would carry to the enemy the news of their whereabouts. With set teeth and burning heart

the hunted man registered a vow that if fortune favored him, and he escaped from his present predicament, nothing, not even the fear of the gallows, would save Hugo Vanuela from his vengeance.

His thoughts were interrupted by the rattle of accouterments, as the men dismounted and loaded their pieces. The appeal of Ballestos had had its effect. Carroll noted their forming in line about the foot of the slope. He drew his sword and laid it beside him, and looked again to the priming of his pistol.

The outlook seemed hopeless. Yet he had no thought of surrender. In their present temper it would be useless to look for mercy from the men who believed he had attempted to murder an unarmed and helpless man. Ballestos, ever vindictive, would see that they listened to no explanations. Carroll's retreat once discovered, a dozen long lances thrust into the cleft, or a plunging upward volley from the escopetas at close range, would bring the end. They would murder him if he surrendered, and if taken to task would say he died resisting.

Suddenly he thought of his dispatches. It was his duty to see that they did not fall into the hands of the enemy. Drawing them from his doublet, his fingers began to twist them to bits. He could bury the pieces in the sand on the floor of the cave.

Again the man's soul was shaken by a temptation so strong yet so insidious that as he struggled with it the cold drops gathered on his brow. Once destroyed, the dispatches with their merciless message could never reach Fremont, whether he himself escaped or whether sunrise would see his shot-riddled body sprawling at the foot of the slope. Perhaps, as Loreto had said, their destruction would save the life of Don José Antonio Arillo. It was the one thing he could do, dying, to yield his honor that the father of Loreto Arillo might live. Even now she was praying, and her prayers were about to be answered. "That you shall never reach Fremont—that you shall die before sunrise," she had said. So the accursed Indian hag had spoken! "She who loves you shall pray for your death."

The tense fingers bent again in a tearing motion. Then came from the foot of the slope the voice of Ballestos.

"Ready! Aim!" Carroll, his temptation vanished, hurriedly thrust himself backward into the inmost corner of the fissure. Unconsciously he had returned the papers to his doublet.

"Fire!"

A thundering volley blazed out at the foot of the hill. Carroll heard the sharp splatter of lead against the rock, and his cheek stung as a bullet

"Now, boys, forward!" came the voice of the officer. "Climb slowly; keep close together; hold your lances short. Stab at every suspicious shadow. We'll get him, sure."

The ascent was never begun. The voice of Ballestos broke suddenly into a wail of terror:

"Jesus Maria, what is that?"

There was a death-like silence for a moment, then came a simultaneous piercing shriek of terror from the entire band.

"The Black Matador! The Black Matador!"

With a scramble of hoofs and yells of fear they galloped down the arroyo in a wild panic, never waiting to set foot in stirrup, but clinging monkey-like to their horses' necks.

Carroll, marveling at the strange rout, waited for an instant, hardly crediting his senses. All was silence save for the merry prattling of the rill at the foot of the slope. Carefully he lowered himself from the rock lip and, dropping to the narrow ledge beneath, looked up at the summit.

There, outlined against the background of the moonlit heavens, his arms folded, his head bent, stood the familiar figure of the Black Matador, as he had last seen it the night the mysterious phantom had given him life and freedom at the lonely adobe back of the Paredon Bluff.

From far down the arroyo flashed a random shot—a shot fired in the sheer bravado of

cowardice, or by accident, by one of the fleeing men. The black figure swayed, bent at the knees, clutched at his breast, and with a ghastly thud tumbled down the rock face.

Carroll bent over the crumpled figure at his feet.

"Marshall—Jim—is it you? Are you hurt?" he asked as his fingers wrought hurriedly with the fastenings of the black mask.

Suddenly it came away in his hands and dropped to the ground. He was looking down into a handsome face distorted with the agonies of death —the face of Servolo Palera.

Carroll's parched lips refused to whisper.

"They are gone. Thanks be to the Virgin for that," Palera gasped as he opened his great dark eyes, clouded with the film of death. "Thou art safe, friend Carroll—she will be glad—tell her—"

His voice failed, and he sank back, the blood bubbling from his lips.

Quickly Carroll tore away the black garments. There was no hope. Palera was shot through the chest, a ragged, gaping wound, from which the blood welled in copious floods with each pulsation of the heart.

"Servolo, my good friend," the American said tremulously, "my adversary only by the cruel chance of war—thou who hast so many times befriended me—it was thou, was it not, who set

"Yes, it was I,—with the aid of my brother Hilario." Servolo's voice broke into a sob. "He died on the mesa to-day. Father Estenaga, too, aided in thy escape."

"But—but how comest thou here?" queried the astounded Carroll.

"My heart longed for a last sight of her. After the battle I rode to the pueblo. I witnessed your meeting without the door. When thou hadst gone, I heard her sobbing—for thee. I—"

His eyes closed, and gasped for breath; then, as the paroxysm passed, he went on:

"I knew well thou wert riding to danger. From the pueblo I followed thee,—to warn,—to protect, if need be,—"

With an effort he raised himself on his elbow.

"For her—for Loreto Arillo—have I done what I have done—that she might be happy. Tell her—tell her—that, dying, I loved her—happy that I have saved the man she loves. Tell—"

Carroll, his eyes welling with tears, caught him in his arms as he sank back.

"Sometimes—sometimes," came from the blood-stained lips, so faintly that the lieutenant bent close to hear, "ask her to think of me in the days to come.

"Do not weep my friend," he said, as his clouding eyes looked up into Carroll's face; "I

am glad to die for her as our martyrs were glad to die for the Holy Faith. For a long time have I known it had to be—that the end of my days was close at hand. Far—far better it is so. Death to me is sweeter far than life would be without her. Behind the rock is my horse. Ride, ride!" A tremor convulsed his frame. His whispered tones became childish and caressing.

"Loreto, mi querida—laugh for joy—weep not for me. Have I not saved thy lover? Loreto —I love—thee."

The blood surged again to his lips, his head fell to one side. The Black Matador would ride no more. Servolo Palera was dead.

Overwhelmed by the revelation, John Carroll sat like a man of stone. Far from his thoughts were the dispatches, the Californian camp but a mile away, and Vanuela hurrying to Fremont on his mission of vengeance. He only remembered that he was gazing down into the sightless eyes of a man who had loved with a love that passeth the understanding of man, a man who had twice saved his life and at the end given his own that joy and love should be the portion of Loreto Arillo—and John Carroll.

The lieutenant sat alone in the moonlight, the dead man's head on his knee, and wept like a little child. Grotesquely the trees about him seemed to assume fantastic shapes, and a wolf on

the far foothills, scenting death, howled dismally.

Tenderly he wiped the blood-stained face with his handkerchief, and reverently closed the staring eyes. On the dark, handsome face of the dead poet, framed in its flowing, wavy locks, was a look of unutterable content.

With one last backward look at the black-clad figure on the narrow ledge, Carroll climbed the ridge and found Servolo's horse, standing with drooping head, patiently awaiting the return of his master—the master whose hand on its rein it would never know again.

Once in the saddle, Carroll's thought reverted to his mission. He sighed wearily. Vanuela had now a full hour's start: nothing but the interposition of Heaven itself could prevent him from reaching Fremont first, and bringing him down like a whirlwind on the Californian camp.

Yet his duty was clear: the dispatches must be delivered. There was, too, a possible chance that he might intercept Fremont's force on the way to make a night attack on the Californians. Spurring his startled and sensitive steed into a furious gallop, he swung away to the west toward the Cahuenga Pass on as wild a ride as the horrors of war ever inspired.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AN HONORABLE PEACE

"YES, Señor Colonel Fremont," Hugo Vanuela was saying, "you can capture them easily. They are but twenty miles distant to the east, at the San Pasqual Rancho of Don José Antonio Arillo. They are disheartened, their powder exhausted, and their ranks weakened by desertions. A quick gallop through the night with your entire force, and you can end the war."

Vanuela's voice was eager, his eye bright with unconcealed joy. The hope of years, the planning of many months, the dream of his life, was approaching triumphant realization. The fall of the house of Arillo was at hand.

The two men were alone in a vaquero's hut at the foot of the Cahuenga Pass. Fremont made no reply; he was studying the face of Vanuela. Ever a judge of men, there was something in the Californian's personality that made him hesitate. Yet there was no good reason to disbelieve the stranger's story; for more than once during his long march southward from Monterey had come to the Pathfinder's ears rumors of a conflict in which the Californians had been worsted.

"Good," he said at length. "Señor Vanuela, you yourself shall guide us to the camp of the

enemy. You will ride ahead with an armed guard on either side of you. They shall have orders to shoot you dead at the first sign of treachery." Somehow, he had no idea of Vanuela resenting his distrust.

Fremont's piercing eyes were full on Vanuela's face, but he could find no sign of flinching in the Californian's steady gaze.

"That is well," Hugo answered calmly. "I am satisfied."

The American was convinced.

"The necessary orders shall be given at once."

He called aloud, and an orderly entered the room.

"Have the bugle sound 'Boots and saddles,'" he ordered. "We march in twenty minutes — all but ten men, who will remain behind to guard the baggage."

From the next room came sounds of a loud altercation, and Lieutenant Jack Carroll burst into the room. He was pale, breathless, and apparently exhausted.

"Stop!" He held up his hand with a commanding gesture.

"Who are you?" Fremont demanded angrily. "How dare you countermand my orders?"

"Lieutenant John Carroll of the Marine Corps," he panted, "now of Stockton's volunteer company."

A flash of recollection came into the face of the Pathfinder.

"Ah, yes; I remember you now—in the pueblo last summer. You remained with Captain Gillie. You were there when the revolt broke out. But—"

"For God's sake, colonel," interrupted Carroll, "in the name of humanity, wait—hear me before you give that order."

Vanuela's deep voice broke in. "The Señor Carroll doubtless carries dispatches from Commodore Stockton. Hence his haste and agitation."

Hugo's mind had come to a swift conclusion. In no other way could be explained Carroll's presence near the arroyo, and his unexpected appearance here. The Californian was smiling happily; the dispatches once in Fremont's hands, he had but little fear of the outcome. He knew they contained the death warrant of the Dons.

Carroll's eyes, burning with bitter hate, were fastened on Vanuela.

"There, colonel, stands the man who is responsible for every drop of blood shed in California," he cried.

"Have you dispatches for me?" Fremont's voice was tinged with impatience.

"Hear me first, colonel—"

"Lieutenant Carroll, hand me the dispatches." There was no mistaking the peremptory tone. Fremont's patience was at a breaking point.

For a moment no sound could be heard in the room but Carroll's hard-drawn breath as he leaned one hand against the wall, an expression of utter despair on his drawn face. Reluctantly his other hand reached into his doublet.

Fremont was puzzled. He scrutinized in turn the faces of the two men. There was something here beyond his understanding. As Carroll placed the papers in the colonel's hands, Hugo grinned gleefully. The Gods of Chance were with him; but he frowned uneasily a moment later, when Fremont laid the missives on the table and said quietly:

"Lieutenant Carroll, I will hear you now." Then, noticing the waiting orderly, "You may pass without, Lieutenant McLane, but remain within call. Proceed, Lieutenant Carroll, but be brief."

"Will not the colonel read his dispatches?" suggested Vanuela.

"Silence!" snapped Fremont.

The colonel's keen intuition and quick sympathy, a part of his Gallic inheritance, convinced him that in the lieutenant's tale he would find the explanation of the curious conduct and strange demeanor of the two men. In Carroll's face he had noted the signs of intense mental suffering. He knew him as a capable officer and an honorable man; of the other he knew nothing, save that he was a deserter from a hopeless cause.

"Colonel Fremont," said Carroll, his voice now under control, "there stands the man who, assisted by a British spy, conceived and organized the revolt in the pueblo. All the brave fellows who have died are that one man's victims." His voice broke with emotion. "He is the one," his voice rising almost to a scream of hate, "who began it all. He has been a traitor to both sides—a red-handed murderer."

Vanuela's easy smile had a trace of contempt.

"Por Dios, colonel, I cannot dream of any reason for so wild a charge unless it be that the lieutenant's reverses as a lover have inspired in him a desire to injure a more favored rival. You will understand, colonel," he added, as he leered insultingly at Carroll. "We both admire the same lady. The lieutenant is vindictive."

Vanuela's calm assurance, and especially his last words, maddened the lieutenant. Springing forward, he drove his fist full in Hugo's face and, wild with uncontrollable passion, struck him again and again in the mouth, sending him in a heap against the wall. The Californian, spitting blood and teeth, staggered to his feet and drew his sword. He stopped suddenly; he was staring into the muzzle of a pistol in the hands of Colonel Fremont.

"Swasey! Bryant!" called the colonel, now boiling with anger at a brawl in his presence.

"Both these men are under arrest," he said to the guards, who, rifle in hand, had rushed into the room.

"Cover them with your rifles. Stand them against the wall. There, that will do." Fremont's face was flushed with indignation and excitement, but his words were cool and deliberate.

"Now," he said quietly, as he sat on the edge of the table, the pistol still in his hand, "we are going to get at the facts, and some one is going to suffer for this disgraceful scene."

With the muzzles of the loaded rifles gaping in their faces, Carroll and Vanuela stood with their backs against the wall. Hugo's chin was dabbled with blood, flowing in a steady stream from his battered mouth. Carroll was white, and panting with rage.

"Now, lieutenant, tell your story."

"That man there, in company with a British secret agent, one MacNamara, who was known in the pueblo as Almagro, instigated the revolt."

At the name MacNamara, Fremont was all attention.

"MacNamara!" he exclaimed. "The Irishman to whom Governor Pico made the land grant? But *he* was a priest."

"Never a priest—an English army officer."

"Yes," broke in Vanuela with cool effrontery, "that is true. He was an English secret agent,

and I killed him when I discovered his plans. Here are his papers to prove it. I am glad the lieutenant and myself have one point on which we can agree."

Hugo had never intended, in spite of his boasts to Arillo, to deliver the Englishman's documents to Fremont. The forged signatures would necessitate too many explanations. But the unexpected condition of affairs by which he was confronted had forced his hand. As he passed the blood-stained papers to the colonel, his bleeding mouth twisted in a confident smile.

"Yes," retorted Carroll, "you murdered him in cold blood after you had taken his gold—worked with him as his spy—led him on."

"But for what—why—I do not understand," Fremont demanded.

"For a personal revenge only—that Don José Antonio Arillo might be led to break his parole—that he might die on the scaffold. This man has hated Arillo for years. He is a half-breed Indian, whom the *gente de razon* would never recognize as their equal. For years they have scorned him, as they scorned his father."

"Colonel," said Vanuela pityingly, "the man merely vents his personal enmity to make such a charge against me. Don José Antonio is a very good friend of mine; he—"

"Shoot him where he stands if he utters another

word," Fremont said to the guard in front of Vanuela. The Pathfinder's experienced eye had quickly noted the confirmation of Carroll's words in Hugo's swarthy face and high cheek bones.

"I'll have this story without interruption," he continued. "Go on, lieutenant. How do you know all this? What proof have you?"

Like some Olympian avenger, Carroll stood before the fast paling conspirator. Link by link he told the story of Vanuela's machinations.

"Scorned by the quality of the pueblo, ostracized on account of his Indian blood, ever vicious, with the vendetta inherited from his father, it was this man who inspired these peaceful people to hopeless revolt, disaster, and death. His first move was to plot the revolution, working with MacNamara and using his gold freely among the young, hot-blooded youth of the pueblo. Then he became Captain Gillie's spy, that he might also use him to gain his end—his revenge on Arillo. Working with both sides, he had wonderful influence. It was he who gave to Gillie a list of alleged conspirators and had them dragged to prison in chains because of a boyish escapade which he himself had inspired with his liquor and gold. This caused the first deaths, those of young Reyes and old Yorba.

"The Dons, whose humiliation he thus accomplished, are men of the highest honor. They had

kept the terms of their paroles to the letter until Captain Gillie himself broke its one unwritten condition, that their persons and property should be respected—broke it by dragging them from their beds, from their weeping families, and loading them with chains. This is no time for niceties. With all due respect for Captain Gillie, who will bear witness to the truth I am speaking, it was Vanuela's hatred of the Dons, and especially of Arillo, the plotting of the English spy MacNamara, and the errors of the captain as an administrator, and nothing else, that have caused and continued this war."

There was no sound in the little room but the resonant tones of Carroll, high pitched, reverberating from wall and ceiling. Fremont was intent and eager; Vanuela, contemptuous, cynical, almost debonair, smiling at each point Carroll made and clinched like a prosecutor before a court.

The guards, forgetful of orders, moved by the intensity of the strange scene, allowed their rifle muzzles to sink to the ground as they blinked wonderingly in the insufficient light.

"But that is not all. Perhaps the exigencies of war might excuse him, were he not a spy, a murderer, and an assassin. From his own lips have I heard the story of his villainy. On my way to reach you I almost stumbled on the

Californian camp, and took refuge in the branches of a great tree. I saw him disarm Arillo and then proceed to torture him, taunting him with his own helplessness—Arillo was tied hand and foot—and boastingly unfold to him the story of the success that would soon attend his planning of months. All of this as a preliminary to as diabolical and cold-blooded a murder as man made in the image of God ever premeditated. His dagger was at Arillo's throat when I fired from the tree. Note his head, Colonel, where the ball grazed the scalp. Oh, that it had gone truer!"

Fremont stepped closer to Vanuela, parted with his fingers the yellow hair over his ear. His face hardened as Carroll further detailed the cruel deliberation of Vanuela's attempt to take Arillo's life, the sudden appearance of the Californians, and the escape of both into the arroyo.

"But wait," commanded the lieutenant, as Fremont's face gave signs of his feelings. "There is one thing more you must know. He claims to be our friend, yet but for him the pueblo would have been peacefully surrendered to Stockton last October. Arillo was ready, Alvaro was ready, Cota was ready, their officers were ready. But Vanuela, traitor to both sides, anxious only for the success of his own damnable revenge, prevented it by a forged message to the

man who was to give the signal for the flag of truce. Benito Willard himself will testify to this. And why? Because such a surrender would permit Arillo to live.

"In the still night at San Gabriel he murdered the Englishman MacNamara—stabbed him to death because he had no further use for him, and because he wished to see the Americans victorious and the men who had been forced by the pressure of events to break their paroles die—to see Don José Antonio Arillo die a felon's death on the scaffold.

"As I heard him boast to the helpless Arillo, he comes now to make of Fremont the same dupe he made of MacNamara, of Flores, of Gillie, of every one who ever listened to his serpent tongue. Of you he hopes to make a tool to wreak his vengeance on Arillo—"

"Wait a moment."

Fremont, absorbed, enthralled by the burning words of Carroll, words that came flowing from a heart for months laden with sorrow and apprehension, had forgotten the blood-stained papers in his hands. "Wait till I look at these."

Quickly he ran his eye over the credentials of the secret agent, signed by a member of the British cabinet, and the petition to the British admiral at Monterey with its long list of Californian signatures, smeared with MacNamara's blood.

"It all confirms your tale, lieutenant. But these signatures—if they be genuine— The man seems to have done us some service."

"Forgeries, every one of them. He fooled the Englishman. I heard him admit it to Arillo. He played traitor to MacNamara even as he betrayed his own country. True, he wished us to be victorious, but only that Arillo might die. God, how he taunted that bound and helpless man, insulting even the virtue of his daughter, till I could bear it no longer, and I fired upon him."

Fremont glared at Vanuela. Hugo had but one card left—his bravado.

"Shall I not be heard?" he demanded, in spite of the threatening muzzle before his face.

"You shall," said Fremont, "at your trial, and may God have mercy on your soul. Guards, take him away."

Before Hugo and the guards reached the door, a slight, dark-bearded Californian stepped within the room. As Vanuela stared at him, despair came into his face.

"Don Jesus Pico—alive!" he gasped. His face grew suddenly aged. With head bent, he followed the guard out the door. Hugo Vanuela's hope was fast oozing away.

At Vanuela's startled words Carroll's heart bounded with joy. Don Jesus Pico, who had

broken his parole—Don Jesus Pico, whom Fremont was reported to have court-martialed and shot at San Luis Obispo weeks ago, stood before him, alive and well! Then Fremont had already shown mercy. Now was the time to plead for the life of his friends.

"In God's name, colonel, have mercy. It is true you can easily attack and capture them. Such an action would make of them prisoners of war, and as such, subject to a court-martial for breaking their paroles, a court-martial to which there could be but one result.

"Colonel Fremont, spare these men of the pueblo! These gentle, high-minded Dons are not and never have been our enemies. We have driven them to war, and now we would murder them for sins that never were theirs. I believe they are willing to surrender. Grant them terms that they can honorably accept—terms that will include forgiveness for the broken paroles."

Again he held Fremont's eyes captive while he vividly pictured events in the pueblo leading up to the riot at the gate,—the burdensome regulations laid on the shoulders of a free people, the harsh rule of Gillie, and the midnight arrest of the Dons. As Gillie's name fell again from his lips, Fremont nodded comprehendingly.

"A brave man, a good soldier, but tactless—tactless. But wait—I have forgotten. The

commodore's dispatches," he said, as he turned to the table.

As he peered over the unfolded papers, his brown, unshaven face darkened with displeasure, and a look of worriment wrinkled his brows.

"Commodore Stockton's instructions are plain enough," he sighed. "Unconditional surrender of their armed forces, and no amnesty to be granted to the six that he has mentioned, Flores, Arillo, Garfias, Alvaro, Pico, and De la Guerra."

"But you have information," persisted Carroll, "of which Commander Stockton never dreamed. In the light of my evidence and your own deductions, to carry out Stockton's instructions and to place these men in the hands of a court-martial of his and Kearney's men, smarting as they are over the defeats at Dominguez and San Pascual, would be equivalent to their unjustifiable slaughter."

Fremont's brow puckered. He was far more of a scientist than a soldier. Never a stickler for military etiquette, he had allowed the subordinate to become, as it were, a pleader before him.

"Colonel," persisted Carroll, "has there not been blood enough already—bloodshed that, as as we now know, was useless and unnecessary? Both sides have made mistakes."

"In the days to come," came the gentle voice of Don Jesus Pico, strangely convincing and soothing after Carroll's impassioned tones, "shall

the historian write that the Americans began their rule in California with an act of vengeance or by a deed of mercy? Shall the Californians of the future love or hate the name of Fremont? Think well, my friend. Thou art making history now."

There was a dead silence in the room. Fremont's leathern face showed no effect of his pleader's arguments. His wonderful, piercing eyes were veiled in thought as he stared fixedly at the floor, and nervously twisted a strand of his ragged beard. Then, raising his head, he said grimly and almost aggressively:

"I do not know what my superior officer, the commodore, will say; I do not know what the war department will say; I do not know, Don Jesus, what your historian will say. But I do know what I am going to do."

He paused; the two men hung breathless on his words.

"Don Jesus, ride at once to the Californian camp at the San Pasqual and tell them,"—he smiled quizzically at Pico—"tell them that you are still alive, and that they need have no fear of me. I will grant them an honorable peace."

CHAPTER XXXV

AT CAHUENGA PASS

LIGHTS burned low, and men spoke in subdued whispers in the ranch house of the San Pasqual.

Don José Antonio Arillo, still weak and unnerved, his cheek bandaged, lay on a couch, while about him gathered the Dons, awed by his recital of Vanuela's treachery and attempt at cold-blooded murder.

Mercurial of temperament even in times of peace, their impulsive hearts sank as they listened to the revered Arillo, whose sturdy frame and well-poised mind had been to them a tower of strength in the more promising stages of the war.

Not only amazed were they, but filled with superstitious fear. It was Vanuela, they concluded, and not the mysterious American who had sought refuge at the Devil's Rock, where, as their terror-stricken men had told them, the Black Matador had appeared to save the fugitive from vengeance. The accursed specter's coming was ever portentous of disaster and death.

As for the unknown American, they assumed he was an accomplice of Vanuela, and that both were now well on their way to the pueblo. The stranger's identity was unknown even to Arillo,

who had lost consciousness the moment before the pistol shot rang out from the oak. Hugo's statement to Arillo that Fremont was but a few miles distant, they believed to be the boastful braggadocio of the moment. Fremont's cavalry battalion had last been heard of many miles to the north. That he could have reached the neighborhood of the pueblo, over mountain passes, amid the inclement weather of the last week, was incredible.

The silence was broken by the snap of Don Augustin's snuffbox.

"Por Dios," he muttered, "it is no marvel that Vanuela escaped. The devil loves the son as well as he did the father."

Open burst the door, and a Californian rushed into the room. His fear-distorted face and panting words brought them startled to their feet.

"God and his angels!" he gasped, faint with terror. "It is the spirit of Don Jesus Pico himself! I saw his face—I heard his voice! He spoke to me from the bushes behind the hill—Don Jesus, who has been dead for two weeks."

Instinctively every man crossed himself. Horror upon horror was being thrust upon them. Crushed by disaster and defeat, their souls darkened by the shadow of a shameful death, dumbfounded by the discovery of Vanuela's villainy, awed by the reported apparition of the Black Matador—

to them it seemed but the fitting culmination of a night of terror that the spirit of the dead Don Jesus, whom all knew and loved, should come to them with a message of warning. Not a man doubted. The lips of several were moving in a silent appeal for protection against the powers of the unseen world with which the night seemed filled. Their brave hearts, for which the deadly roar of battle had no terror, were shaken with the crawling fear of the unknown.

Don Andreas was the first to recover.

"Dead or living," he said courageously, "my cousin Tortoi will not harm me. I myself will go to meet him," he added, as he took his sword belt from a peg on the wall.

As he stepped toward the open door an uncertain figure loomed dark against the square of starlit sky. Wrapped in a gray serape, the face shadowed by the broad brim of a sombrero, in the wavering light of the flickering candle flames the form seemed dim and spectral.

Not for a moment did Don Andreas hesitate. Meeting the newcomer halfway, he extended his hand and said in a voice vibrating with emotion:

"Jesus—Tortoi—my cousin, is it thou? Dead or living, speak! Hast thou a message for me?"

Don Jesus glanced slowly around the shadowed room. He noted the awed faces of the Dons,

their expectant, half-crouching attitudes. Removing his sombrero, he cast it on the table and smiled at them reassuringly.

"Surely am I alive, caballeros—very much alive, thanks be to the Holy Mother. Yet, as thou sayest, Andreas, it is so; I have indeed a message for thee, cousin, a message for all of you."

Around him they pressed, touching his face, feeling of his garments, grasping his hands as if to assure themselves of the truth of his words and the testimony of their own senses. Don Andreas, with a choking sob of gladness, enfolded his cousin in his arms and kissed him demonstratively.

"Hearken, friends," said Don Jesus, when they had recovered from their surprise. "I bring you a message of good cheer. Colonel Fremont with his 'Bears' is but twenty miles away, near the Cahuenga Pass. He it was who saved me from death—pardoned me when I had been condemned to death by a court-martial at San Luis Obispo. He, Fremont, bids me say to you that he is ready to grant you an honorable peace—a peace which shall wipe out all the mistakes and errors of the past."

As the first rays of the rising sun drives the gloom of night from darkened plain and forest, so did the unexpected words of Don Jesus bring sudden joy and gladness to the haggard countenances of the condemned men. For a space no

man spoke; they were gazing at him almost incredulously.

The princely head of Don José Antonio had dropped to his breast, and his lips were trembling in a silent prayer of thanksgiving. Don Augustin sat rigidly erect, his fingers toying with his snuffbox, his face impassive save for a grim look of satisfaction. Rico was laughing, an odd little laugh that had in it an hysterical note. Cota's face was in his hands, his shoulders moving tremulously. De la Guerra, as he leaned back against the wall, tapped his finger ends together, and muttered: "Por Dios—por Dios—por Dios!"

Then as the full import of the words of Don Jesus penetrated their sorrow-laden souls, they broke out into a chorus of exclamations. The mighty strain was ended. But Flores and Garfias sat unmoved; they had no confidence in the promises of Fremont, and little desire to remain in California.

"No," said the commandant stubbornly, "I do not trust the word of Fremont any more than that of Gillie. I remember the cannon at San Pedro. The promises of such land pirates are but as the marks on the sands of the seashore. You may go, if you will. I recall the old proverb,

'El pez que busca el anzuelo
Busca su duelo.'[1]

[1] "The fish that seeks the hook seeks its death."

I shall start for Mexico while yet there is time. But," he continued, "I will appoint Don Andreas here commandant. He may consummate the surrender if he will. On that shameful paper future generations shall never read the name of Don José Maria Flores. Who rides with me? The road is open; we can escape."

"I will," said Garfias.

As they passed without the door Don José Antonio silently drew his sword, and cast away the scabbard. His eyes were resting on Flores.

"Pardon, Don José Maria. There is a score you must first settle with me." In Arillo's voice there was neither anger nor bitterness, but the inflexible sternness of an upright judge.

Flores started. "The boy, then—is—dead?" he queried.

Don José Antonio nodded.

Sighing regretfully, Don José Maria bared his blade. As the clang of steel came to Don Jesus, standing a few feet away, he rushed to them and struck up their weapons with his own.

"God and his angels!" he cried. "What means this?"

Briefly Arillo told him the story of José's mission and added:

"And now the boy is dead—shot as a spy. He —he," the Don could not bring himself to utter Vanuela's name, "told me of it last night."

"He lied, the accursed son of Satan, he lied!" cried Don Jesus. "The boy lives, and is free—in the camp of Fremont. I spoke with him but yesterday."

Flores, greatly relieved, and Arillo, gladness showing in his face, gravely clasped hands.

Before the eastern sky was white with coming day, Flores, Garfias, and a dozen others of the Californian officers were galloping eastward toward the San Gorgonio Pass, en route to Mexico, while Don Andreas Pico, Arillo, Rico, Cota, De la Guerra, and Alvaro, accompanied by Don Jesus, were hurrying westward toward the Cahuenga Pass.

It was broad daylight ere they halted and dismounted at the door of the vaquero's hut where Fremont had established temporary headquarters. Their mien was a strange mixture of the anxiety of the moment and the habitual dignity of their race as they filed silently into the bare little room where sat Colonel Fremont and Lieutenant John Carroll. At their entrance the Pathfinder rose to his feet and greeted them with a cordiality that brought smiles of relief to their worried faces.

"We feel," said Don Andreas, after he had told of the flight of Flores and his own appointment as commandant, "that we have done all that men can do." There was sad resignation but no humiliation in his bearing.

"It is both a pleasure and a duty to grant generous terms to men who have fought so bravely for their native land," Fremont responded gravely. Silently the Dons bowed in recognition of his complimentary words.

Pacing in his quick, nervous way up and down the little room, Fremont dictated the terms of the treaty, turning every now and then to the Dons, who nodded their consent at the end of each clause.

The Californians were to surrender all their public arms and ammunition; they were to be permitted to depart peacefully to their homes; each should have the privilege of becoming a citizen of the United States or of retaining his Mexican citizenship.

He paused abruptly; for a space his eyes sought the floor. The Dons moved uneasily; no word had been said of the broken paroles. They had trusted the American; they were here in his armed camp, in his power. Could it be possible, that, as Flores had warned them, they had but been lured to their death? Had Don Jesus himself been deceived? Was it not this very man, who now held their lives in the hollow of his hand—was it not at his orders that Scout Carson and his Indians had shot to death the unarmed Berryessa boys? Their paling faces showed they feared the worst.

Fremont's brilliant eyes again swept their anxious countenances. His whimsical smile trembled behind his beard as he turned to Carroll, who, seated at the table was writing the document at his dictation.

"Write this, lieutenant," he said: "'The commissioners, on the part of Lieutenant Colonel Fremont, agree and bind themselves, on the fulfillment of the other articles by the Californians, that the latter shall be guaranteed liberty and protection, whether on parole or otherwise.'"

"And this," he added, after a moment's pause: "'All officers of the Californian army, whether citizens, foreigners, or others, shall receive the protection guaranteed by this article.'"

Slowly John Carroll traced the words. His hand trembled, and the letters forming beneath his pen quivered through the mist that gathered before his sight. Don José Antonio's eyes were gazing at him, the recorder of his life warrant.

At last, at last, the nightmare of months was gone, never to return. As the lieutenant drew the back of his hand across his brow to wipe away the telltale evidences of his emotion, the colonel gazed at him, and smiled knowingly.

With the somber mien and awed solemnity of men who realized that their native land, the fairest on earth, was in that moment passing from the hands of their race to the rule of the stranger,

that they were participants in an event that would effect the lives of millions yet unborn, the Dons stepped forward one by one and gravely affixed their signatures to the document. As the last man laid down the pen, the impressive silence gave way to a hum of felicitations on the advent of peace.

The fate of California was decided.

"May the good God give your people the wisdom to rule wisely and well," said Don José Antonio, as he pressed Fremont's hand.

"Amen, I say to that, with all my heart," returned the American.

Without either having spoken, Don José Antonio Arillo and Lieutenant John Carroll together sought the glory of the sunlit morning. Around them the land, from which the scourge of war had been lifted, smiled in all its wondrous beauty of far-flung mesa and azure mountains. Beneath a sky of arching blue, the larks were rising from the lush green meadows, trilling their cheerful song in sympathy with the joy-filled hearts of the two men, as with clasped hands they stood gazing into each other's eyes. For a space neither spoke; it was a moment too sacred for words.

Arillo was the first to break the silence.

"It was thou, Juan,"—it was the first time he had ever used the familiar form of address or called the lieutenant by his first name,—"it was

thou who fired the shot at the oak last night. Don Jesus has told me all."

Carroll told him the tale—his fight with Vanuela, the arrival of the horsemen, the wild dash up the arroyo, his narrow escape at the Devil's Rock, the appearance of the Black Matador, and the death of Palera.

"Servolo—Servolo—was—the Black Matador —Servolo dead. Jesus Maria!" exclaimed the Don, aghast. "Poor lad—poor lad! All California loved him."

As the lieutenant, continuing, told of his own wild ride through the night, of his horse dropping dead of exhaustion at Fremont's door, the scene in the Pathfinder's presence, the discomfiture and imprisonment of Vanuela, there was open admiration in Arillo's full-orbed gaze. Laying his hand on Carroll's shoulder, he said reverently:

"Ah, my friend Juan, God is good. Above all He is good to me—in giving to me such a son," he added meaningly.

Hurrying footsteps behind them caused the Don to turn his head. A young man, breathless and excited, was running toward them. It was José. Lieutenant Somers strode along a few feet behind him.

The boy threw himself upon Arillo, his face radiant with joy.

"Father, father," he panted, "thou art well

and safe, and I—I—I have found my father—my real father. This," he babbled, turning to Somers, "this is my father—Don José Antonio Arillo." Then as his glad gaze turned again to Somers, "This is my father."

Half hysterical with happiness, half amused by the confusion of his own disjointed words, the boy threw back his ruddy head and laughed in the sheer exuberance of happiness.

The sound of creaking wheels and shuffling hoofs came to them from up the pass. The Californians were marching into camp. With downcast mien and averted eyes, the column of horse moved slowly on until in front of the colonel's headquarters. Lieutenant McLane, Fremont's aide, stepped forward to receive the arms.

"Two cannon," he said, as he made a note on a slip of paper in his hand.

"Yes, señor," drawled Don Andreas, who, seated on his horse, was assisting in the details of the surrender. "That, señor, is the cannon your General Kearney presented us with at San Pascual. He was as loath to part with it then as we are now."

McLane grinned good naturedly.

"Now your powder, Don Andreas."

A Californian stepped his horse out of the ranks and handed to the American a small bundle tied up in a red handkerchief.

"The powder, señor."

"Lord, is that all you have?" McLane asked, as opening it he stared at the few pounds of grayish dust.

"It is, señor," responded Don Andreas, grotesquely. "We used all but that at the battle on the mesa. It is perfectly good powder, I assure you, señor, though somewhat deliberate in going off, but it makes a loud, beautiful noise and much nice white smoke."

McLane, glancing up, caught sight of the green and red of the Mexican standard, no longer proudly afloat, but rolled on its staff and lying across the pommel of Cota's saddle.

"Your colors, señor," he said courteously but firmly.

Beneath his bowed head, Cota's tears were falling fast as he gazed unheeding on the flag—the flag he had carried through all these weary months, the flag that had seen the backs of Mervine's men at Dominguez, that had waved above the blood-soaked field of San Pascual, and the wild charges at the river and the mesa,—the flag that must now pass to the hands of the conquerors.

Slowly Francisco raised the staff from his pommel, while his shoulders shook convulsively. Then before he handed it to the American, who stood waiting patiently, his own eyes moist with

sympathy, Cota lifted a corner of its silken folds and pressed it to his lips with almost religious reverence.

The curtain had fallen on the last scene in the conquest of California.

Farther up the pass, from behind the flap of a tent, Hugo Vanuela gazed down the roadway. A few feet away stood a guard, leaning on his rifle. Hugo had been noting the signs of suppressed excitement in the camp.

"Have the Californians surrendered?" he asked the American.

"Yes, señor," returned the American. It was the frontiersman who had witnessed the scene in Fremont's presence, and his dislike of Vanuela was plainly apparent in his thin, keen face.

"And there ain't going to be no one hanged, either, señor. The colonel just up and pardoned them all," he added, as he gazed into Vanuela's clouded countenance.

"But Commodore Stockton—he—"

The frontiersman stopped in the middle of his short beat in front of the prisoner's tent and stared at him contemptuously.

"Stockton—hell!" he snorted truculently. "The colonel has a hundred more men than Stockton. We'd chase Stockton and his fool sailors into the sea, if Fremont gave the word. You don't seem to like the news none, señor."

There was a tinge of malice in his last words.

Up the winding roadway approached a happy group. Don José Antonio, his hand in that of José, was listening gravely to the boy's flowing talk. Behind them walked Carroll and Somers. All unconscious of the gleaming eyes bent upon them from behind the tent flap, they halted a few yards away.

To Vanuela's ears came the ringing laugh of José. He saw the happiness in the face of Arillo, the glad, triumphant bearing of Carroll.

"Don Jesus alive," he muttered bitterly, "the young fool José alive,—Arillo free and smiling."

The son of Leo was biting his bruised lips till the blood, unnoticed, trickled slowly down his chin. In his eyes was a fiendish glare. His brow corrugated, and the lines of his face deepened into an expression of utter despair.

To this had come all his planning of months! Arillo was free. He, himself, was a prisoner, facing an investigation of his connection with MacNamara,—an investigation that could have but one result, a trial for the murder of the Englishman.

Vanuela sank upon a roll of blankets and hid his head in both his hands. His soul was shaken, not with fear or remorse, for of either the man was incapable, but with the bitterness of crushing disappointment. Yet in the frontiersman's

contemptuous reference to Stockton was a ray of hope. It must be that Fremont had decided to defy Stockton. His ignoring the commodore's orders implied as much. There would probably be civil war between them, as there had been in the past between the rulers of California. That would indeed be his opportunity. Stockton would welcome his aid, and it would be strange indeed if, during the turmoil of civil strife, he could not find an opportunity to wreak his long-sought vengeance on Arillo.

Quickly he mapped out a course of action. He must lose no opportunity to escape. That accomplished, he would seek Stockton and join his forces. If he met death in the effort to win freedom, so be it. Even that was better than his own humiliation before the *gente de razon.*

"The colonel wishes the prisoner brought to his headquarters," called one of Fremont's staff as he cantered past.

As Vanuela, accompanied by the frontiersman, walked down the slope toward the roadway he shot a covert sidewise glance at the long hunting knife in the guide's belt, almost within reach of his hand. He smiled grimly and his eye brightened as he noted, a few yards down the trail, a group of untethered horses.

The two strode on. Hardly twenty feet away were they when Arillo's happy laugh rang out.

As it reached Hugo's ears, his eyes took on the dangerous glitter of a wild beast at bay, and his face convulsed in insensate fury. In a twinkling he had forgotten his hope of escape; he saw before him only the enemy of a lifetime, laughing in happy abandon.

With lightning-like quickness, Vanuela snatched the knife from the belt of the guard, broke away from him, and rushed toward Arillo. For an instant the frontiersman hesitated, and then his rifle snapped like the crack of a whip. Don José Antonio, startled by the report, turned his head to see Vanuela tumbling forward on his face.

Only a moment, however, and Hugo was again on his feet, struggling and staggering toward Arillo, the blood gushing from his neck, the uplifted blade in his hand, his face contorted in maniacal fury. More quickly than Carroll, who had drawn his sword, could spring forward to meet him, another rifle spoke from up the pass. Vanuela reeled, lurched another step, and as the knife dropped from his nerveless hand he collapsed in a crumpled heap at the feet of Don José Antonio.

Jim Marshall, his smoking rifle in his hand, came whirling down the trail.

"Jehosophat, I sure got him across the sights after all!" he cried, as he gazed down from his saddle at the bleeding form on the ground.

Even with the cold hand of death heavy upon him, the indomitable spirit of the son of Leo was manifest. Raising himself slightly on one hand, his clouding eyes filled with unconquerable hate fixed full on Arillo, he gasped out a foul oath. Then his face contorted, his body writhed, and he sank prone on the grass.

The feud was ended. Hugo Vanuela was dead.

Marshall had not dismounted. He sat in his saddle, looking down at the motionless form of Vanuela.

"I never did count shootin' Indians as regular killin', nohow," was his muttered comment.

"Good-by, lieutenant," he said, as he reached down his hand to Carroll. "Must be goin'—can't stop—carryin' papers for the commodore to Monterey."

He hesitated for a moment, a quizzical expression in the look he bent on the lieutenant. Then with a farewell wave of his hand, he galloped away across the plains.

At the sound of firing, armed men came rushing from all parts of the camp. Fremont himself, hatless and excited, came galloping up. He gazed for a moment at the twisted figure on the blood-stained grass.

"It is as well," he muttered, as he turned away.

Arillo and his friends, dazed by the sudden snuffing out of a human life, stood in awed

silence as one of the Americans covered the body with a blanket.

"Let us go," said Carroll. "Our horses are impatient to carry us to the weeping women in the pueblo who love—you," he added cautiously.

But in the eyes of Don José Antonio Arillo was a far-away light, such as shone eighteen centuries before in the eyes of a dying Jew when, forgiving his tormenters, he taught a new philosophy to mankind. Brave in war, stern in anger, proud of race, yet ever kindly of heart, the Don lingered over the blanket-covered corpse of Hugo Vanuela.

"Ay de ti," he sighed, "he died unshriven."

He removed his sombrero and looked down at the stiffening form of his enemy.

"Dios de mi alma," he murmured, as he lifted a corner of the blanket, "how like to his father he looks as he lies there. Ah, Juan, life and death are alike strange, mysterious, and incomprehensible. But good indeed it is to know that there is a God who is all-wise and all-merciful, even, we may hope, to such as he."

He fumbled for a moment in his garments. Then laying his sombrero on the grass, he dropped to his knees and crossed himself. His lips moved as the beads slipped through his fingers. Carroll stared at him in awed wonder.

Don José Antonio Arillo was praying for the mercy of God on the soul of Hugo Vanuela.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE PASSING OF THE SHADOW

"Have mercy on them,
Have mercy on them,
Have mercy on them."

TEARFULLY and tragically, and with funereal monotony, the wives and sisters, the mothers and cousins, the kinsfolk and friends of the Dons, kneeling within the closely shuttered home of the Arillos, gave in doleful cadence their responses to the litany for the dead.

Heroic in her grief, Señora Arillo read from the much-thumbed prayer book by the light of a wavering candle flame, and the kneeling assemblage in response sent up their repeated supplications for the souls of the departed men.

According to a rumor which several hours before had reached the pueblo, the Dons of the army of Flores, captured by Fremont, tried by a drumhead court-martial, and summarily executed, had paid the penalty for their broken paroles. The circumstantial and apparently authentic report had originated with an Indian peon who, the night before, while searching for his horses, had stumbled on the American camp, where he had been detained as a suspicious

person. He had been released in the morning, but not before he had seen at a distance the familiar figures of the Dons, and later had heard the shots that ended the existence of Hugo Vanuela. A mischievously mendacious frontiersman who assured him in very bad Spanish that they were "shooting a dozen prisoners over there," completed the delusion. In the pueblo his tale, chiming as it did with their fears for the last two months, met with instant credence. Manuel and Mariano had already set out for the Cahuenga Pass with a carreta for the purpose of bringing home the bodies.

Dulled by a grief too great for comprehension, Loreto Arillo's eyes looked blankly into the gloom before her. Her lips answered mechanically in unison with the others, but there was no fervor in her devotion, and not even despair marked her low responses. Delfina sobbed between her hysterical words, and the others mingled lamentations with their prayers. But now was the time when strength must be shown by the head of the house of Arillo, and each pious ejaculation of the señora rang clear and firm, encouraging and sustaining the others

The world had done its worst. The only solace lay now in the hope that a benign Providence might forgive the earthly transgressions of the departed husbands and fathers, and that

in another life all might be reunited. For the shameful felon's death, naught on earth could ever atone. The tarnished honor, the crumbled pride, the beggared homes, could know no remedy. The hangman's noose was the final chapter in their book of horrors. For the aged, perhaps, the hope of another life might beckon, but for Loreto Arillo the gray walls of the cloister already loomed with alluring promise of peace after the hurts of time. Again the voice of Señora Arillo, vibrant with sublime faith and hope, inspiring devotion, enunciated: "Jesus, Infinite Goodness."

Before the lips of the kneeling women could frame the response, "Have mercy on them," a soft masculine voice replied, "Has given you back your loved ones."

In the narrow shaft of light from the silently opened door stood Don José Antonio, the dust of the road on his beard, his garments worn and stained, but the light of love and happiness and the endearing fatherly smile playing about his lips.

The reaction was too great. Señora Arillo, whose strength had already been taxed beyond endurance, sank fainting to the floor, while the others rushed out to meet the returning cavalcade, which through the open door could be seen entering the plaza. On the carreta meant to carry the dishonored corpses of the Dons rode Manuel,

gayly waving his cap, his arm about the ruddy-haired José. Around the glad-faced men as they dropped from their horses pressed their wives and relatives, their faces wet with joyful tears, their lips uttering fond ejaculations.

Don José Antonio bore his fainting wife to a couch, while Loreto and Delfina alternately administered restoratives and caressed the father so miraculously restored. In the excitement no one noticed the American officer who stood within the doorway of the Arillo home.

As Delfina rushed away to José and Manuel, Loreto Arillo's eyes turned toward the open door and the excited group in the plaza. Then they fell full upon the tanned and haggard features of Lieutenant Jack Carroll. As her glance met his, she covered her eyes with her hands as though the sight of the hated blue uniform had been a blow in the face.

To her mind there was but one explanation of his presence. Her father, though alive, was still a prisoner, and the man whose hungry eyes were gazing at her was his guard. Over Don José Antonio still hung the shadow of a disgraceful public trial, and the ultimate terror of Stockton's threat. Why else was her father accompanied by an armed man who had thrust himself into the privacy of their own home? In a few moments they would take him away again.

"Loreto!" Carroll stepped forward with outstretched hands, a glad, expectant look on his face.

The girl raised her head with a proud lift, strangely like her father's. Though the dull ache was again tugging at her heartstrings, her jet-black eyes as they met his were cold and hard. To her rescue came the courtesy of her race. The man before her was no stranger; he had broken bread with them; he had once possessed her heart. Though one of their hated conquerors, he was yet beneath the roof of the Arillos.

"Señor, our house is yours," she said gravely, motioning him to be seated; then, courtesying, she turned away. The señora too, recovering from her swoon, interpreted Carroll's presence in the same way, but more diplomatically welcomed the enemy within her gates.

"You will leave him with us to-night, Señor Lieutenant?" she begged.

But John Carroll did not hear her. He only knew that the woman whose entrancing beauty and once-won heart had been his last thought when he looked into the leveled muskets of Ballestos' men, the woman for whom Servolo Palera died as a zealot dies, the woman for the sake of whose happiness he himself had been hunted like a wild beast in the darkness of the night, had welcomed him with a cold civility

to which even scorn and passionate hatred would have been preferable. Beneath its tan, his face went deathly white.

But Don José Antonio, with that quick, kind mind which made him the idol of his kin and his people, had seen it all.

For once heedless of the proprieties, in his great strong arms he gathered them, the dust-stained soldier and the flower-like girl, and crushed them into each other's arms.

"Thank Juan Carroll that I am here," he said, his voice vibrant with exultant emotion, "that I am alive,—that your sorrow is turned to joy,—that I return to enjoy an honorable peace instead of dying a felon's death. Thank him that the house of Arillo will live and prosper, and that our enemy has perished, and thank God, my daughter, that such a man as he has enshrined thee in his heart."

His words seemed to cover all details, as if with some God-like shaft he shattered every unhappy memory and blotted out the horrors of the past. Explanation seemed unnecessary.

As he and Señora Arillo passed out the door to join the joyfully tumultuous throng in the plaza, John Carroll stood with the woman of his dreams weeping but happy in his encircling arms.

Past the half-open casement where Jack Carroll and his betrothed stood, marched the frontiersmen

of Fremont. The story of the Pathfinder's generosity to the Dons was known now to all the pueblo. As the men of his command walked their horses slowly through the crowded plaza, they saw about them none but smiling faces, far different from the scowls and muttered curses that had greeted Stockton's sailors only two days before. The excitement of the assembled crowd manifested itself in a low joyous hum, growing ever louder and louder.

"Boom."

As the echoes of the mellow, mournful peal from the bell tower of the old Plaza Church died away, every Californian bowed his head, and stood reverently silent.

"Boom."

Another procession was slowly entering the plaza. Fremont's men, at the word of command, reined their horses and sat with heads uncovered, awaiting its arrival.

"Boom."

The bells of the church of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels were tolling—tolling for Servolo Palera. Slowly the funeral cortège halted, and lifting the litter on their shoulders, the mourners bore him toward the open door of the edifice.

The maker of sweet songs was dead, the dreamer of glorious dreams was no more. For the last time Servolo Palera was entering the sanctuary of

his fathers, to lie in state in the city he had loved so well.

Sorrowing, the companions of his boyhood, his comrades of the camp and field, the people of the pueblo who had joyed in the music of his voice, whose souls he had stirred with his songs and melodies till their love unbounded had gone out to the maker thereof, did silent homage to the singer whose voice they would hear no more.

Grief-laden, they gazed for the last time on his peaceful face as they filed past his bier, piled high with flowers. Strong men and tender-hearted women sobbed aloud at the sight of the thing of clay, once quickened by the soul of the soldier, the patriot, and the poet.

And ever above, from the old gray tower, came the mournful booming cadence of the tolling bell.

Within the house of Arillo, Loreto, her face in her hands, leaned against her lover and sobbed while Carroll's strong arm supported her. It was her last, her heartfelt tribute to the memory of the man in whose love for her there had been no touch of earth, a love less human than divine—the love of a man complete, unselfish, unbounded in its final sacrifice.

At the other end of the room José sat on the floor at the feet of Delfina, his upturned eyes ever on her darkly radiant face.

'Thou wilt have me now, Delfina, even without the shoulder straps, now that I have a name?" he queried, half mischievously.

The girl's eyes filled with tears, and as she brushed back the drooping lock of hair from his brow she said, "José, José, taunt me not with my unkindness. Thou foolish lad, I loved thee always, and never more than when I flouted thee."

Suddenly she started, and sat erect. Clasping her hands before her, she ejaculated, "Holy Mother, forgive me! I had forgotten."

Springing to her feet, she hurried away toward the chapel of the Arillo home. José, amazed, stared after her uncomprehendingly.

John Carroll, glancing at the boy, smiled at his clouded countenance, but even as he smiled his own face filled with deep anxiety.

Prosaic but sufficient was the cause of his uneasiness. The lieutenant was penniless. Not for six months had the men of Stockton's or Fremont's commands received a cent of pay. The voyage of the specie-laden ship around Cape Horn had been, it was believed, delayed by baffling winds. An embarrassing predicament it was at any time for a man as proud as John Carroll, but doubly so now that the house of Arillo would soon be abustle with preparations for the coming wedding. Well John Carroll

knew the unwritten law of the land and the people,—that the bridegroom should present to the bride a chest filled to overflowing with raiment rich and diversified, a custom any neglect of which would be construed as slighting carelessness on the part of the groom. In all the pueblo there was but one man of whom he could have asked a loan, Benito Willard, and he was absent at his rancho on the frontier.

Satirically he recalled his own boastful words to Don José Antonio months ago, "I am a soldier and a gentleman." At present his condition was almost that of a pauper. Suddenly he thought of Marshall, and his frequent whimsical references to his hidden wealth, and in spite of his predicament the lieutenant smiled. With the thought of the frontiersman came the memory of the missive a soldier of Fremont's had handed him as he left the Cahuenga. In the excitement of the morning he had forgotten to open it. Hurriedly unfolding it, he read:

"MY DEAR JOHN:

"I'm kinda sorry I kaint stay an' see the weddin', but an old grizzly like me wud be out of plaiz among them swell Arillo folkses.

"I thought ye mought be aneedin' some money. Sech things like weddins cost a lot, they say. Look in the northeast corner of the ole bull ring and ye'll find a few thousands in coin and nuggets and gold dust. 'Twuz bankin' it that made me wear the Black Matador costoom.

"It was this I wanted to tell ye, John. This ole country is

just plumb full of the yalla stuff, specially in the hills up north. Fer God's sake don't tell any one till the treaty's signed. The Lord bless ye, John, you will hear of me agin. That's all this time. The rancho and the white hoss can wait for awhile.

"Yours truly,

"JIM MARSHALL.

"P. S. Whose the other fellah playin' Matador? 'Twar n't me helped ye get away from the pueblo last summer."

"Juan, what hast thou there?" queried the girl, with all a lover's privilege now fully established.

"That," replied Carroll, "is my final passport to Paradise."

Gold and gray, sunshine and shade, checkered the pueblo. Dazzling white, the adobe walls threw back the glare of afternoon, in sharp contrast with the dark roofs and the cool, inviting spots of shadow. The crowds had dispersed; the streets were empty. Silent and peaceful lay the sleepy city as on the day, years ago it seemed, that John Carroll reined his horse by a window and looked for the first time into the eyes of the woman who on the morrow was to be his bride.

"Mi querida," he whispered, "it was all a dream. Sorrow, grief, fear, danger, dishonor,—all are faded away like shadows."

Tremulously she leaned toward him, and as their eyes met her red lips whispered in reply: "Surely are they gone, my Prince. The great shadow is gone,—to threaten us no more. Vanished forever is the shadow of the sword."

EPILOGUE

GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!

HARDLY was the ink dry on the treaty of Guadaloupe Hidalgo, which gave California for all time to the Anglo-Saxon, than Jim Marshall made good his boast made to John Carroll on the battlefield of the mesa. The news of the "accidental" discovery of a gold nugget in a mill-race where now stands the little town of Coloma went, as he had prophesied, "ricochetting" around the world.

To the west coast they came, across the arid, Indian-infested plains, and by the fever-reeking Isthmus of Panama, the flood of forty-niners, the somber-faced sons of New England side by side with genial men of Cavalier stock from the tidelands of Virginia,—not they alone, but the bold, the aspiring, the venturesome of all nations, lured on by the magic shimmer of the precious metal. But on Jim Marshall fortune ceased to smile. Other men, more selfish and unscrupulous, wrested from him the fruits of his discovery and his hoardings of years, and though a grateful state granted him a pension, he died alone and forgotten in his cabin at Coloma, his dream of a "white hoss" and a rancho unrealized.

For many years Don José Antonio Arillo remained one of the foremost figures in the life of the pueblo. With honor and dignity he served his country as mayor, as judge, and in the legislature of his native state. His unswerving rectitude, kindliness of heart, and unfailing courtesy ever held for him the love of his people, and soon won for him the respect and confidence of the newly arrived Americans.

But ever dear to his heart were the ways of the past. Men there are yet living who have seen him, on many a day in the early seventies, riding his horse up Main Street, clad in all the colorful garb of the past,—laced trousers, gracefully drooping serape, broad-brimmed sombrero brilliant with silver,—his steed prancing and curveting proudly as if conscious of the worth of the burden it bore. Many a drowsy summer afternoon would he foregather in the patio of the Pico Hotel —that had sprung up at the corner of the plaza— with his comrades of the past, Don Andreas Pico, Don Augustin Alvaro, Don Manuel Garfias, Don Francisco Cota, and many others. There, with many a laugh and sigh, would they fight over again the battles of the hopeless cause.

The years have passed in their silent, ceaseless march. A new century with its ever-increasing marvels is upon us. Larger, greater, and grander

than its brave defenders ever dreamed is the pueblo of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels.

But the land about is strangely changed. No longer are the long brown swells and wide-flung mesas bare and treeless, for everywhere the drooping pepper tree and towering eucalyptus, importations from Peru and Australia, are seen in groups on the hillsides and skirt the valleys with green. Vanished are the cattle and horses that in countless thousands grazed on the broad acres of the big ranchos—now the sites of busy cities set in far-reaching fields of rich alfalfa, or orchards where the dark green orange trees or spreading walnuts stand in serried rows.

But here and there, in city and in field alike, the wandering tourist finds unexpectedly the fast-crumbling ruins of an old adobe. Often, quite often, he may chance to hear from stately men and dark-eyed women not the guttural utterance of the recent Mexican immigrant but the musical and sonorous roll of the old Castilian speech.

Few indeed of the descendants of the *gente de razon* are left in the land of their fathers. To many, disaster came with two dry winters of '62–'63, years when the cattle and sheep died by thousands, and their owners sank from affluence to poverty,—reverses which were borne with the sublime Christian fortitude and calm resignation

of their race. For others, the proud, old-fashioned, confiding honor of the *gente de razon* was but a poor protection, and from them were stripped, by means devious and dishonorable, the lands of their fathers. Some favored few, perchance by the guidance of kind American friends who knew the new ways and the new laws, have held fast to their family acres. They are to be found to-day holding high places in the business world, at the bar, and on the bench. Hardly may you know them from other modern men of the present-day world, save for the large, full, heavy-lidded eye and the dignified but gracious courtesy that marks their speech and manner.

As proud and glad are they to call themselves Americans as we, but first of all are they Californians—Californians of the Californians. But to this day their lips curve with scorn when they tell the tale, as their fathers told it to them, of the harshness and treachery of Captain Archibald Gillie, and their eyes will flash with a pardonable pride when they speak of the days of the hopeless fight when lance met saber at San Pascual, or the wild charges at the Paso de Bartolo and the mesa. Even as the son of our southland holds dear the memory of the men who died in vain at Manassas and Shiloh, even as the man of Scottish blood clings to the memory of "Bonnie Prince Charlie," the last of the royal Stuart

line, so do the Californians of Californian blood revere the memory of their own lost cause.

And who shall say them nay?

Perhaps, dear reader, on some winter day when the blizzards are shrieking across the prairie wastes of the Missouri, and the snow is swirling madly in the streets of far-off Chicago, a kindly fate may find you in the balmy winter sunshine of Los Angeles.

No longer is it the sleepy pueblo of the past, with bare and sandy streets bordered by adobes with low verandas. Around you roars the life and tumult of a great modern city. In your ears is the raucous cry of the newsboy, the honk of the automobile, and the rattle of the trolley car. Perchance, as you pass the north end of the great pillared Federal Building, it will be hard indeed for you to realize that you are standing on the very spot where John Carroll crossed swords with Don José Antonio, and that over there across the street, a few doors north of where Commercial debouches into Main, stood the west gate of the stockade, where, in the darkness of the night, he who was the "Black Matador" brought the message of a sorrowing girl to the man she loved—though his own heart ached the while for very love of her.

There, too, stood Carroll and his men, as with bated breath they watched the wild race up the

slope. As you pass on toward the plaza, between the lofty buildings, you can glimpse the hill up which Marshall and his men dragged the gun, that eventful September day. But of the ramparts of the old fort not one trace remains, for the hilltop, now smooth and leveled, is cumbered with modern, tree-embowered homes. But you may stand, if you will, on the very spot where Gillie signed the shamefully broken treaty with Flores, for a flag-pole marks the place. And from above the yawning tunnel at your feet, you may look down at the courthouse door, where, broken and battered, stand the cannons he treacherously rolled into the water at San Pedro.

But if you would peep into the past as far as you may, go some quiet Sunday morning to the ancient plaza, where you will hear the old bronze bells, cast in far-off Spain two centuries ago, pour forth their mellow call, as they did that Sunday morning so many years ago when Lieutenant John Carroll first looked into the lovely face of Loreto Arillo.

Before you lies the plaza, across which Don José Antonio Arillo dragged his clanking chains, but there is now a fountain in the center, circled by spreading palms and wax-leaved magnolias. In vain will you look for the homes of Arillo and Don Augustin Alvaro, but the house of Doña Chonita, from which Loreto hurried the night Carroll

struck down the drunken straggler, and from which Carroll set out on his ride to find Fremont, still stands in this year of our Lord, 1914—a pathetically lonesome figure amidst the towering blank walls of the brick warehouses about it.

And if, perchance, you cross the river, you will not see the wide sweep of green vineyard and cornfield that met the gaze of Gillie's beleaguered men as they looked down from their hilltop, but instead, a vast tangle of railroad yards, frowning factories, gas tanks, and dingy warehouses. But if the day is clear, you can see to the south the Paredon Bluff (now topped by the pointed towers of the Catholic Orphanage), behind which Servolo Palera rallied his little army, still lifting its bold head above the now empty river bed. And farther beyond, but hidden from your view, is the broad mesa where on that fateful afternoon of January 9, 1847, the Sons of Ancient Spain fought their last gallant fight against the aggressive and relentless Anglo-Saxon.

Along the devious route, toward Pasadena, far beyond the city's bounds, where marched the defeated and disheartened Californians, now glide the noisy trolley and silent motor car. On the very spot where burned their last camp fires, hurrying figures follow the curving flight of the golf ball across the links, while from the top of the San Pasqual Hill look down the red-roofed towers of

a great tourist hotel. And near to the foot, half hidden in the pepper trees, is the adobe where the men condemned to an ignominious death by Commodore Stockton held their last despairing councils, and where Don Jesus Pico came in the night with his message of mercy.

Gone are the live oaks and the open parks to the west, toward the arroyo, save for here and there a lonely straggler left in street or yard. But on the high arroyo hill they cluster as of old. Where once the cattle strayed in fenceless freedom, paved streets and rows of brown bungalows now sweep around the foot of the hill toward the modern Pasadena.

By the arroyo's side the giant oak, a mighty monarch of the past, stands yet in its lordly magnificence as it stood that far-off night when Arillo and Vanuela fought in the moonlight beneath its branches and the unhappy Carroll clung breathless to the limb above. Over the arroyo still hangs the Devil's Rock, with its yawning cave, high above the sunken gardens of a kindly millionaire.

But when fading day dyes the western sky with bold bands of orange and crimson, and the deep rich indigo of the mountains softens and melts into a filmy gray violet, the old theater of love and hate seems one again with the semblance of the past. As the green hillsides, the dark forms of the trees, and the sharp outlines of the buildings

merge into the deepening duskiness of coming night, over all the graying world there breathes a brooding melancholy. Brushing the cheek with a touch of fairy lightness, from the distant gulches of the mountains comes a long-drawn sigh, as if the ancient soul of Nature were sorrowing secretly for the days that are no more.

THE END

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